



Youth Transitions Advisory Council
Annual Report – October 2015

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Linda O’Neal, Executive Director
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My motivation is be better than what I was, have more than I had to make all those who believed in me proud, and to show everyone who doubted me, that I prevailed. Destiny



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STATE OF TENNESSEE
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TO: Members of the Tennessee General Assembly
FROM: Linda O'Neal, Executive Director
DATE: October 23, 2015
RE: *Youth Transitions Advisory Council 2015 Report*

In accordance with T.C.A. 37-2-601 – 37-2-606 and included in this report as Appendix B, attached please find the Youth Transitions Advisory Council 2015 Report. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council brings dedicated service providers and child advocates together from all across the state who are developing and implementing new strategies to meet the challenges of engaging former foster youth as they make the critical transition from adolescence to adulthood.

As we all know from experiences with the young adults in our lives, and as a growing body of research confirms, the human brain continues to grow and develop well past the age of majority. Brain executive functions of good judgment and maturity are among the last to develop in the mid-twenties. For good or bad, the choices we make and the goals we set regarding education, career and interpersonal relationships shape the opportunities and outcomes available to us later in life. For former foster youth, the challenge of that transition is even greater because they often lack the important emotional and financial support nurturing parents provide their adult children.

Prior to the advent of extension of foster care services, former foster youth were often left to fend for themselves upon aging out of state custody. Estranged from their families, lacking adequate education and social skills, many of these young people found themselves in dire circumstances, unable to meet their daily needs, continue their education, compete for jobs, find suitable housing or access adequate health or mental health care services. Many former foster youth experience homelessness, unplanned pregnancies or have encountered the criminal justice system because they aged out of custody without the proper tools to face the challenges of modern life most adults experience today. Extension of foster care services allows these youth the opportunity to complete or continue their education, with access to health care, housing assistance and other supports to help them succeed in life, while at the same time playing an important role in achieving the goals Tennessee has set for improving graduation rates, increasing educational attainment, building stronger families and creating safer communities.

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth express appreciation to the members of the General Assembly for the opportunity to improve the lives of these young people, and for appropriating much needed funding to the Department of Children's Services to assist these youth at this critical time in their lives. This report outlines the work of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council as it continues to develop strategies to assist these young adults as they prepare for success in the lives ahead of them. We hope you will find the resources necessary to continue to fund essential services so all Tennessee youth have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The only way you fail is to give up. Strive to be better and that's exactly what you will get. -Kayla

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2015

In the 2015 session, the Tennessee General Assembly passed and the Governor signed Public Chapter 330 amending Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 55-50-312(a)(1) by adding “foster parent, or other authorized representative of the department of children's services” to those who can sign financial responsibility forms, thereby enabling foster youth to get a Tennessee driver license. This legislation was initiated by the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (TN DCS). It provides an opportunity for children in foster care to obtain a driver license in Tennessee, an important “normalizing” experience for these youth.

Tennessee also enacted Public Chapter 357 that amended Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-6-6001 by providing youth who enter state custody in the 11th or 12th grade to graduate with the number of credits required by the state, instead of requiring them to meet a higher local district requirement. This legislation ensures youth in foster care are not penalized if they are placed in a school system that requires a higher number of credits for graduation than required by the state.

Extension of Foster Care (EFC) Services was provided to a total of 714 youth in Fiscal Year 2015. This reflects the total youth participation, regardless of the year they accepted services.

The number of youth participating in Extension of Foster Care services increased for the fifth consecutive year while the number of youth aging out of state custody decreased for the fifth consecutive year.

The rate of participation of those eligible to participate in Extension of Foster Care Services increased from 40 percent in 2014 to 48 percent in 2015.

	Total Aged Out	Total Aged Out Eligible for EFCS	Eligible Population Accepting EFCS	Percent Accepting EFCS
FY 2008-09	1209			
FY 2009-10	1162			
FY 2010-11	1131	813	163	20%
FY 2011-12	1084	748	201	27%
FY 2012-13	1017	768	301	39%
FY 2013-14	984	779	312	40%
FY 2014-15	932	731	353	48%

In FY 2015, both the Educational and Training Vouchers and Bright Futures scholarship saw increased utilization. TN DCS Independent Living (IL) did outreach to the population that was adopted or went to Subsidized Permanent Guardianship (SPG) over the last two years. Tennessee Promise has also been a factor in the increase.

FY	ETV	Bright	Total
2013	282	126	408
2014	262	139	401
2015	357	145	502

TN DCS had an increase in youth eligible for and receiving the Hope Foster Care grant

FY	# of scholarships
2015	89
2014	52
2013	40
2012	47
2011	45
2010	49

TN DCS Office of Independent and Transitional Living has provided training to 2269 participants. Trainings included education on transition plans, IL services, understanding the transitioning population and youth engagement.

Training Group	Number of Participants Trained
DCS	1193
Provider Agency	284
Foster Parents	246
Court	40
Mixed Group	318
School	158
Youth	30
Total	2269

Four resource centers are funded for Fiscal Year 2016. The “I AM READY Resource Center” opened in Chattanooga in spring 2014. It joins existing Resource Centers, Youth Connections in Nashville, South Memphis Alliance in Memphis, and Helen Ross McNabb in Knoxville, providing Opportunity Passport, transitional services, and assistance in the four largest population centers in Tennessee.

The four resource centers also received funding to support a one year Pregnancy prevention grant called “Sisters Saving “ that started in FY 2015.

Former foster youth are categorically eligible for TennCare under age 21, and effective January 2014 became categorically eligible until age 26. TN DCS is working to educate and connect with young adults that are eligible for this service. A Public Service Announcement had been added to the TN DCS website at <http://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/tenncare-for-youth-who-aged-out>. TN DCS uses response.unit.tenncare@tn.gov to help assist our young adults eligible for insurance to 21. In FY 2015, TN DCS helped connect five young adults, and reached out to about 500 past clients from 2007 through 2009.

As a result of Tennessee’s participation in the “Older Youth Learning Collaborative” sponsored by Casey Family Programs, TN DCS has begun implementing the Permanency Round Table (PRT) process that was designed by staff at Casey and has resulted in improved outcomes for older youth involved with the public child welfare system in other states, tribes and territories. The roundtable process builds upon the child and family teaming process and involves outside stakeholders (courts, private/public non-profits, community members) to explore permanency and connections for youth who are at-risk of aging out of care. Follow-up from the round tables is done during monthly permanency reviews within the regions and subsequent roundtables are held if needed. Currently, TN DCS has implemented the process in South Central and Knox regions with plans to add another two regions in the next several months.

TN DCS is committed to ensuring 90-plus percent of youth discharged from foster care because they reached the age of 18 shall have at least one of the following apply at the time of discharge: earned a GED, graduated from high school, enrolled in high school or college or an alternative approved educational program for special needs children, currently enrolled in vocational training, or employed full time. The calendar year 2014 rate was 89.4 percent. This is the highest percentage ever. TN DCS went into maintenance in this area of section VI of the Brian A. Settlement Agreement.

TN DCS went into Brian A. maintenance in Section VI.F, Ensuring a Full Range of Independent Living Services for Older Youth. The Settlement Agreement requires that: “DCS shall have a full range of independent living services and shall provide sufficient resources to provide independent living services to all children in the plaintiff class.” TN DCS will work to sustain maintenance in this area and continue to enhance its network.

The Department of Children’s Services continued to engage in extensive collaborative work with colleges and universities to build relationships that encourage strengthened support for youth participating in Extension of Foster Services and increase their retention within post-secondary

education. In addition to the supportive services at colleges and universities, five youth receiving Extension of Foster Care Services benefitted from those relationships by being moved up on the waiting list to enter Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.

TN DCS has continued efforts to implement strategies to conduct credit checks on 14, 15, 16 and 17 year-olds to determine if any youth is a victim of identity theft or credit fraud and clear the records, if necessary, before age 18. TN DCS has started to build a process and as of July 2015, requested credit reports on 3, 233 youth in custody through Equifax. So far, 11 youth have come back with credit histories. DCS will work to clear credit information and develop the process to ensure all youth 14 and older have credit checks through Transunion, Equifax and Experian.

During Fiscal Year 2015, thirteen peer advocates supported youth at foster care review boards for 812 foster youth. In Fiscal Year 2013, DCS entered into a five-year \$55,500 per year contract with the Administrative Office of the Court to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates to work with Specialized Foster Care Review Boards. The contract established training requirements for peer advocates and included provisions to pay travel, per diem and stipends for the peer advocates.

TN DCS developed an RFP for step-down services for youth exiting youth development centers (YDCs) and released the RFP during the first quarter of fiscal year 2015. Three agencies were awarded funding for step-down services, Monroe Harding, G4S and Meridian Behavioral Health (group effort). These services will help youth step down from YDCs in a timely manner, and enhance their eligibility for EFC.

The Clinton Foundation builds partnerships between businesses, governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals to transform lives and communities from what they are today to what they can be tomorrow. This year Tennessee had two commitments related to services and supports for foster youth. Youth Villages attended the 2014 and 2015 Clinton Global Initiatives America meetings to provide an update on the continuing commitment to serve all young adults aging out of care in Tennessee, "Preparing Foster Youth in Tennessee for Success as Adults." In 2014 and 2015, through "Creating a Pathway to Success for Youth in Foster Care," Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) committed to partner with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services and the PENCIL Foundation to expand education, training and employment pathways for foster youth. MNPS, TN DCS, and PENCIL work collaboratively to identify, recruit and serve an estimated 69 foster youth in the MNPS system over a three year period and foster meaningful relationships between the youth and local businesses. In 2014, this partnership served five youth and DCS hopes in 2015 the number will grow through outreach and coordination.

TN DCS continues to work on quality improvement initiatives. TN DCS Division of Continuous Quality Improvement and Quality Control has added the following items to Continuous Quality Improvement tools:

- Youth age 14 and older participated in the development of his or her permanency plan, in consultation with up to two members of the case planning team; as well as transitional planning for a successful adulthood including specification of a child's rights with respect to education, health, visitation and court participation.
- If the case is closed, discharge planning occurred and the following tasks were complete: Youth aging out of care received a copy of their birth certificate, social security card, health insurance information, a copy of medical records and a driver's license or equivalent state-issued identification card.

TN DCS was represented at multiple conferences in FY 2015 including speaking in front of national advocates.

- Co-Panelist, “Highlights of Research, Policy and Best Practices in Success Beyond 18,” Jim Casey and NGA policy briefing, Washington D.C.;
- Co-Panelist and Tennessee youth panelist, “Creating Access to Opportunities for Youth in Transition from Foster Care,” The American Youth Policy Forum, Washington D.C.;
- Co-Panelist, “Faith, Family, and Community Partnerships,” The LGBT Rural/Southern Summit Series, Nashville;
- Co-Presenter, “Aging Out of Foster Care,” Tennessee Association of Housing Redevelopment Authorities;
- Presentation at the National Governors’ Association Institute for Governors’ Human Services Advisors spotlighting the work of TN DCS, YTAC, and YVLifeSet;
- Participation in the White House Policy Briefing on Prevention of Foster Care;
- Participation in the Administration of Children and Families Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Washington D.C.;
- Participation in Jim Casey youth convening, Chicago.

TN DCS continues to assist youth with special needs transitioning to adult services:

- 26 Youth transitioned from DCS to DIDD from July 1, 2014, through June 30th, 2015.
- Four Youth transitioned from DCS to Adult Behavioral Health from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015.

During FY 2015, approximately 448 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET; 126 young adults receiving EFC obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET; and 21 young adults, including seven in EFC, completed post-secondary educational goals.

In FY 2015, 232 youth in Tennessee participating in the YVLifeSet program graduated from high school. and three graduated from college.

TN DCS coordinated Youth Leadership Academies and Youth 4 Youth (Y4Y) Board meetings in collaboration with community based partners in all three Grand Regions:

Region	Y4Y Meetings	Attendance	Average Attendance
East	13	249	19
Middle	8	81	10
West	12	169	15

In 2014, Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), received a one-year National CASA Fostering Futures grant that ended August 31, 2015. The grant funds were used to increase the number of CASA volunteers trained in the Fostering Futures curriculum and the number of older youth, ages 14-21, served. During the course of the grant, 56 CASA volunteers were trained in the “Fostering Futures” curriculum, 42 CASA staff members participated in Train the Trainer workshops, and 100 “Fostering Futures” curriculum manuals were distributed.

Three local CASA programs, serving eight counties in Tennessee were awarded Youth Advocacy Grants from National CASA in 2015. The grant funds will be used to train more CASA volunteers in the “Fostering Futures” curriculum and to provide support and supervision to volunteers assigned older youth ages 14 – 21.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services began pilot programs funded by SAMSHA to provide mental health services to transition-age youth. The Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative will serve youth with or at risk of serious emotional disturbance in Hamilton County and the rural Northwest Region. Another program, the Tennessee First Episode Psychosis Initiative, *OnTrackTN*, will serve adolescents and transition-age youth in the Northwest Region.

In 2015, the Crossville Housing Authority completed construction on a four-unit apartment complex to house transitioning youth in the Upper Cumberland region. Tennessee Housing and Development Agency provided the funding. Office of Independent Living has solicited other housing authorities to increase the number of units available around the state for Extension of Foster Care youth.

Tennessee Housing and Development Agency provided funding to four programs to house transitioning youth. Oasis and Monroe Harding were awarded Emergency Solutions grants. Crossroads Campus was awarded a Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant and the scope of the

Omni Community Services Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant was amended to include the provision of housing for youth aging out of foster care.

In 2015, kidcentraltn.com, a website that pulls information from across state government so families can more easily find what they need, enhanced its content for school-age youth and added content for young people transitioning to adulthood. Under the Development Section, the 14-16 year old category now has information about Getting a Driver's License and Preparing for Life After High School. The 17-18 year old category now has articles about Building Independent Living Skills and Personal Care and Health Habits.

To support transitioning youth as well as caregivers, a new folder called "Life Skills" has been added to the Support Section. The "Life Skills" category includes additional information about Extension of Foster Care Services, Taking Care of Your Money, Choosing a Home That's Right for You, and Getting on the Right Track for Employment. As this new content was published, kidcentraltn.com also rolled out new header images and sub-section icons that reflect increased content for older youth.

Two YVLifeSet youth were selected to participate in the fourth annual [Congressional Foster Youth Shadow Day](#). One former YVLifeSet participant participated in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute Foster Youth Internship Program.

In April, 12 YVLifeSet youth traveled to Washington, DC, to participate in an event, "The History of Gospel," sponsored by The GRAMMY Museum. During this trip, YVLifeSet youth met with legislators and their staff to talk about the YVLifeSet program and advocate for these types of services to be available for all transitioning youth.

In June, Governor Haslam joined former foster youth and national experts in a press conference at Youth Villages Operations Center in Memphis to announce and discuss positive results of the clinical trial of the YVLifeSet program in Tennessee.

EARLY FY 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Development of a Reasonable and Prudent Parenting protocol has begun. Training for TN DCS, foster parents and courts will take place in FY 2016, and focus on making prudent parenting decisions and more normalcy for children and youth in foster care.

Increased EFC housing is now available through Omni Visions housing. Omni Visions has two houses in Nashville that will serve young men in EFC starting in 2015.

The federal National Youth Transition Database (NYTD) assessment review will take place in September, 2015. This review will help DCS enhance its work improving outcomes and ensuring youth get appropriate services.

TN DCS has been invited to be a Co-Panelist in Washington D.C., for the National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Foster Care Summit.

TN DCS IL participated in the Tennessee Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges/Juvenile Court Services Association Joint Annual Conference and the Administrative Office of the Courts peer advocate retreat.

TN DCS increased the Independent Living Allowance rate for young adults in Extension of Foster Care from roughly \$400 a month to \$435 a month.

Oasis Center has started training staff in the Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®), an evidence-based pregnancy prevention program, so TN DCS can expand TOP® to Mountain View and Woodland Hills YDCs.

In the coming year, kidcentraltn.com plans to add information about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program. This program provides resources such as tutoring, work experiences, occupational skills training, and support services to young people from ages 14 to 24 who meet certain eligibility criteria.

**YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL
RECOMMENDATIONS
2015**

As described in this report, the Youth Transitions Advisory Council has received reports from the Department of Children’s Services regarding the provision of services for youth transitioning to adulthood, representatives from the Resource Centers and other organizations that currently provide services to these youth, advocates for transitioning youth, and most importantly, young adults who have transitioned from state custody. The combined conversations of all interested parties has resulted in the identification of the infrastructure, the kinds of services and supports, needed to help young people successfully transition to adulthood. While this infrastructure is primarily focused on young adults who were formerly in state custody, many of the same resources are also needed by young adults who are transitioning from the children’s services systems for individuals with disabilities or mental health and substance abuse treatment needs to the adult service delivery systems.

Though much work has been done by the many stakeholders involved in this process to fulfill past recommendations, much more work is needed on several of the recommendations before they are accomplished, and some will be ongoing over the course of several years. The following items have been identified as issues yet to be resolved and serve as the recommendations of the Council for 2015.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Department of Children’s Services should implement a “Reasonable and Prudent Parenting” policy, including proposing legislation if needed, to provide a more normalizing adolescent experience for youth in foster care.** Children in foster care should have opportunities for a “normal” adolescent experience. They should be able to participate in appropriate activities that help them develop interaction and judgment skills needed for success in adulthood. Implementation of a “Prudent Parent” approach would mean foster parents could make decisions regarding foster youth for such things as participating in sports, spending the night with friends, participating in extracurricular activities, etc., like they would for their own children. Foster parents are entrusted with the day-to-day care of children placed in their homes. They should also be trusted to use good judgment to permit the children in their care to have a positive, well-rounded adolescent experience.
- **TN DCS, foster parents and contract agencies should focus on earlier interventions with adolescents ages 14-16 year olds to help them prepare for adulthood.** Development of many of the skills needed for successful transient to

adulthood should begin with younger adolescents. Decisions made during this time, especially related to education, have a long-term impact on educational opportunities and success.

- **If the immigration status for youth in foster care is in question, there is a need to clearly establish immigration status for youth before they turn 18.** The immigration status of young adults is important in determining their eligibility for certain services. There are also legal differences that relate to minors that are important, so DCS should assist youth in clarifying their status before they transition to adulthood. Improvements in practice and assistance for these youth can greatly improve their potential and prospects for being productive members of society and contributing to the overall economy. DCS should continue efforts to involve attorneys who provide pro bono legal assistance in this process.
- **There is a need for increased awareness regarding implications of immigration status for youth transitioning to adulthood.** In addition to steps to clearly establish immigration status above, DCS should also work with providers to be sure they know when they do or do not have to ask questions about immigration status and how immigration status impacts service eligibility.
- **There is a need to strengthen the connections between and among DCS and other state departments for an expansion in the service array to assist youth with special needs in the successful transition to adulthood.** Youth who have an IEP yet do not qualify for Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability services (for example, because they have an IQ above 70), often still need assistance. Youth who have other developmental or physical disabilities also have a need for assistance. Special services for this group of transitioning youth include enhanced independent living skills, peer transitional support, support for college accommodations, access to vocational rehabilitation, Labor and Workforce Development programs, community colleges, etc.
- **When children who are in custody are eligible for Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI), TN DCS and Department of Human Services (DHS) staff should assist them in the application process prior to transition.** Negotiating the application process for Social Security benefits is a daunting task, especially for young adults who have disabilities. TN DCS staff should assist youth in this process prior to transitioning as they often have access to medical, psychological and other records that would assist in the eligibility determination process. DHS staff should provide appropriate assistance to TN DCS staff in completing the applications and assist in moving applications expeditiously through the process.

- **Transition-age youth who have never been in state custody need services and supports in much the same way former foster youth do.** As efforts have increased to facilitate access to services for adolescents to avoid state custody, many more youth who are very similar to those in foster care transition to adulthood without a stable, supportive and nurturing family. It is in the best interests of those young adults and the Tennessee community for services and supports to be provided to help them become productive, successful adults.
- **DCS should identify and implement strategies to provide bridge assistance for young people during the initial period of transition.** When transitioning youth experience a gap in assistance that leaves them dependent on unstable and/or unsupportive families or friends, it can result in loss of opportunities to establish a path toward success. Strategies should be in place to ensure they have access to essential supports, including housing and basic needs, until time for college enrollment, move into campus housing, etc.
- **DCS should implement best practices for pregnancy prevention and for pregnant and parenting adolescents statewide.** These practices should especially be implemented in residential programs, through resource centers and other programs/providers. Access to voluntary long acting reversible contraceptives should be available for young women to avoid pregnancy. For those who are pregnant and parenting, best practices assistance should be provided to help them have a healthy, successful pregnancy and become nurturing, supportive parents.
- **DCS should identify and implement best practices for addressing the unique needs of youth who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Questioning (LGBTQ).** The increasing awareness of special issues related to LGBTQ youth highlights the need to improve practice for these youth. LGBTQ youth experience special challenges in custody and in transitioning to adulthood. Identification and implementation of best practices for dealing with these challenges should improve outcomes for these youth and young adults.
- **The Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) should continue to enhance and expand housing assistance opportunities for transitioning youth.** Housing continues to be a major need for transitioning youth. THDA has taken important steps to address this issue by including transitioning youth aging out of care as a priority population due to their increased risk of homelessness and providing funding to four programs providing housing to transition age youth. DCS and THDA should collaborate on strategies to further expand housing options for this population,

including consideration of identifying and implementing a dedicated funding stream to meet this need.

- **Transitioning youth need assistance resolving legal issues they may become embroiled in related to their lack of adult experiences and poor decision making.** Transitioning youth become involved in legal issues related to housing such as leases and evictions, family legal issues such as the custody of a child or divorce, and sometimes criminal activities. The Tennessee Bar Association and Access to Justice should establish a pro bono legal services program geared toward the 18-24 year old young adults who need assistance. The Law School Clinics should be encouraged to consider this as an area where they might provide assistance.
- **Efforts should be made to identify pro bono legal assistance like that provided by the Knoxville Leadership Foundation to assist youth who have been in custody to pursue expungement of misdemeanor charges acquired prior to the age of 18.** Even minor offenses on a young adult's juvenile record can present serious challenges for successful transition to adulthood. Expungement would help alleviate barriers for youth related to education, housing, employment or military service. The Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice program could provide leadership in this effort.
- **Juvenile Courts should review their practices for reporting to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to ensure they are not reporting cases unnecessarily.** Unnecessary inclusion of the names and records of youth who have been involved with the juvenile court system presents serious challenges for successful transition to adulthood. These records have an adverse long-term impact on youth in areas like education, employment, housing and military service. The Administrative Office of the Courts should provide training for juvenile court judges regarding this issue.
- **The Youth Transitions Advisory Council should collaborate with DCS, Higher Education institutions and the Department of Education (DOE) and other stakeholders to develop better strategies to assist youth in maintaining academic eligible.** The most likely reason youth become ineligible for Extension of Foster Care Services is due to academic ineligibility. Youth who lose Extension of Foster Care Services due to academic ineligibility may resume receiving services upon establishment of a new academic plan.

CONTINUING RECOMMENDATIONS

Essential Documentation Recommendation

- **DCS should continue to assist young adults with essential documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, education records, etc.) required for many aspects of adult living.** Essential Documents are listed on page seven of the current Department of Children’s Services’ “Independent Living and Transition Planning Guide,” which can be found at <http://www.tn.gov/youth/dcsguide/manuals/ILTranPlanGuide.pdf>. Current DCS policy calls for all youth ages 17 or older exiting foster care to be provided with one complete set of essential documents required for participating in many of the adult educational, employment, public benefits and other systems. Youth should also receive one set of copies to serve as backup information. Youth also need to be provided with information regarding how to safeguard the documents and procedures for obtaining replacement documents, if needed, and provided assistance when necessary to obtain replacement documents. More work is needed to identify and implement best strategies for securing the documents.

Educational Issues Recommendations

- As school systems in the state have scheduling autonomy, including whether they have a block or period system, **options should be available to foster youth who change schools and/or systems to ensure they are able to maintain acquisition of credits and do not lose the hours required for credits acquisition for graduation.** Transportation to the previous school system or other educational options should be provided by the Department of Children’s Services. Opportunities for success in school, especially including class scheduling, should be a consideration in placement decisions. School counselors should collaborate with DCS educational specialists to prevent discrepancies with credit acquisition and recovery, preferably at the time of enrollment. Concerns about the serious implications of this continuing recommendation on youth led to the legislation passed in 2015 and referenced on page 7 to require a full diploma for certain youth who meet state credit requirements. While this serves a part of the problem, it does not and cannot address movement between systems with different scheduling (block or period),
- **Department of Children’s Services staff and staff at the Department of Education, State Board of Education and Local Education Agencies should work together to facilitate successful transition of youth between and among schools.** This should include minimizing placement in alternative classes except in cases where such placement is required for school or child safety, primarily when youth have been adjudicated for the serious offenses that require notification to the school, or when placement is clearly linked to increasing the prospects for earning credit or participating

in credit recovery/accelerated credit programs. **In any case, including when school notification is required, there should be an individual determination whether placement in an alternative school is necessary and appropriate.** Providing youth with an opportunity for a “fresh start” may facilitate their future educational and behavioral success and reduce the chances of them connecting/reconnecting with “negative” peers in alternative school. This would be consistent with efforts to ensure services are provided in the least restrictive and most appropriate educational environment.

- **Staff with the juvenile courts and Department of Children’s Services and members of foster care review boards and model foster care review boards should acknowledge the importance of educational services in permanency plans.** Educational services should be recognized as the therapeutic services they are for child well-being. **Plans for placement change/return should consider school timetables whenever possible.** Examples include expediting return home or a planned placement change so children can begin a new school year/semester/grading period back in their home school or in their new placement. In contrast, return home or placement changes should be coordinated to accommodate the end of a grading period, semester or end of course testing. Plans should include strategies to ensure youth have sufficient “seat time” to be eligible to take end-of-course examinations. .

Higher Education Recommendations

- **Strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure the necessary steps are taken so youth in custody are eligible to participate in Tennessee Promise.** DCS staff and other providers should assist transitioning youth, and information on how to do this should be communicated clearly in writing and through training by webinar or in person. The Oasis College Connections and other programs across the state, including Tennessee College Access and Success Network, should support youth in establishing eligibility for Tennessee Promise. Tennessee Promise should develop a pool of mentors for children who have been in foster care and young adults with other special needs (mental health, substance abuse, etc.), and those mentors should receive special training to equip them to support these students.
- **When youth transition plans include attending post-secondary education in Tennessee, the plans should include implementation of strategies for applying for financial aid (scholarships/loans/grants) and connecting youth with student life, disabilities and financial aid coordinators or other appropriate resources at higher education institutions to establish a support network for success at the institution.** While this is outlined in DCS policy, there are opportunities to improve its implementation. Youth should be advised of the need for caution in applying for student loans in many circumstances, and the importance of actually utilizing financial

opportunities to advance their education. Youth should also be advised to apply for minority scholarships based on their experience in foster care. There is a need for additional help to maintain grade point averages and ongoing eligibility for EFC, etc. Support is needed at universities, community colleges and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology to provide those young adults who had an IEP or 504 plan in high school with assistance in obtaining educational accommodations in post-secondary education.

- **State-funded higher education programs should explore the feasibility of providing a bus pass as a part of tuition costs, especially for youth transitioning from state custody.** Transportation is a major challenge for foster youth/former foster youth in terms of work and college. Some private institutions in Tennessee already include a local bus pass in their tuition costs. Transportation is an ongoing issue for transitioning youth, and a bus pass could have a major impact on their ability to attend and succeed in higher education. Efforts should be made to focus on transportation providers to enlist their assistance and guidance in identifying strategies to help with transportation options for former foster youth and other transitioning youth.
- Participation in higher education is a major pathway to success for young adults, and especially important for youth who are/have been in state custody. **YTAC needs active participation by representatives of the higher education system in Tennessee to facilitate better understanding and implementation of strategies to address related issues experienced by these young adults.** Efforts should be made to engage representatives of the public higher education system (Tennessee Higher Education Commission/Board of Regents/University of Tennessee System) and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association to participate with YTAC. DCS has met with the Chancellor of the State Board of Regents and the President of the Independent Colleges and requested representatives.

Services and Supports Recommendations

- **Youth who are unable to achieve permanency by age 18 should be encouraged to utilize extended foster care services.** Permanency is the primary goal for all children in state custody. When they are unable to achieve permanency, all stakeholders who come in contact with these youth should encourage them to participate in extended foster care services. All eligible youth should be encouraged to enroll in EFC Services, and DCS should explore the opportunity to add other categories of eligibility allowed by Federal law. This would enable the state to draw down additional Federal funds to provide assistance for vulnerable young adults and provide opportunities to increase participation.
- **Funding for resource centers for transitioning youth should be continued and there should be analysis to determine the need for expansion.** Resource centers are important infrastructure for transitioning youth. Ongoing funding provides stability and

serves as core funding around which other community dollars can be generated. As described in Tennessee Code Annotated 37-2-603, the resource centers that currently exist in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville should provide a “one-stop shop” for foster youth and former foster youth. Youth often come for assistance in acquiring a GED, and then explore other needs. Optimally, assistance with financial management, job search and other related needs should be provided in one place to facilitate keeping youth engaged and ensure all their needs are met. Resource Centers may be needed in other areas in Tennessee as well, so there should be a review and analysis to determine if needs in other/rural areas justify expansion. In the absence of resource centers, other strategies are needed to provide core supports and services. Accessing resource centers on-line is an option to explore. Continuation funding for Resource Centers is essential.

- **The YVLifeSet (Youth Villages Transitional Living Program) should be continued and funded on an ongoing basis.** Through a combination of state funds and matching funds, the Youth Villages contract was continued in Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015, a major accomplishment. The Youth Villages Transitional Living Program is highly effective at ensuring youth aging out of care have the necessary skills and supports to be successful adults. Since the program started in 1999, it has served more than 5,000 youth across the state of Tennessee with a success rate of over 80 percent. Youth Villages’ commitment to the aging-out population is well documented. More information about this program is presented later in other parts of this report.
- **Various options to overcome transportation barriers are needed as this continues to be a great need for transitioning youth.** The bus pass option identified under “Higher Education Recommendations” and the provision of one-stop-shop resource centers discussed above to facilitate access to the broad range of needed services would both help address transportation barriers. Youth Villages has had a few automobiles donated to their program for youth. Youth at some Resource Centers have used matching funds in Opportunity Passports to purchase automobiles. Other creative strategies should also be identified and implemented.
- **CASA programs should continue to educate both volunteers and youth about extended foster care services and challenges transitioning foster youth experience, and CASA volunteers should serve youth between ages 14 and 21.** CASA volunteers are important resources to help youth make successful transitions to adulthood. CASA volunteers and others who are working with transitioning youth should know the importance of linking them with appropriate educational, legal and other services and supports, and including those items in permanency and transitional living plans. DCS has met with CASA to encourage this emphasis on transitioning youth, and CASA has facilitated training to begin to provide support for these youth. The Tennessee

Commission on Children and Youth should encourage CASA programs to serve youth who are participating in Extension of Foster Care Services. CASA has received grant funding to address this recommendation, and this is an important accomplishment. More information is provided in this report.

- **The Department of Children’s Services has made great strides to facilitate continuing TennCare eligibility for all foster youth who transition from state custody to adulthood, and these efforts should continue.** TennCare has advised TN DCS that they are automatically approved for continued TennCare under the former foster youth category as required by the Affordable Care Act. This facilitates ongoing access to needed health services and minimizes the likelihood there is a gap in or loss of coverage because paperwork is not completed timely. Clinical practice guidelines should be developed to focus on the needs of young people transitioning to the adult service systems, and health care providers should be aware of transition needs. DCS should monitor the process to ensure EFC youth are appropriately and timely enrolled as provided by the ACA. TennCare needs to be an active partner in facilitating ongoing eligibility. DCS has been reaching out to former foster youth to help them enroll for continued coverage when they are eligible.
- **All youth who are transitioning need to have a connection to a caring adult who is significant for them and who is available to provide support and guidance.** Mentors or coaches are needed for transitioning foster youth to provide a significant, ongoing supportive relationship, a kind of relational permanency. There should be consideration of the development and implementation of funding for a contract(s) for mentoring/coaching services for youth who are transitioning to adulthood. These mentors/coaches need special training regarding the needs of youth who are transitioning to adulthood and the services and supports that are available to guide them on that journey. If the young person does not already have a connection to a caring adult mentor, when possible, mentors who have personal experience with the foster care system should be identified. As an alternative to a relative or other caring adult, a mentor or coach might serve as a “permanent mailing address” for youth, provide a stable point of contact, or as a repository for copies of essential documents as discussed earlier.
- **The Department of Children’s Services should identify appropriate strategies for transition support services for children who are adjudicated delinquent and do not qualify for Fostering Connections because they are in a secure placement prior to exiting custody.** Many of these youth are also in need of services to increase their opportunities to become successful, productive adults. Current funding levels present challenges, so strategies should be developed to address this need in the future. As noted in the Accomplishments section, three agencies were awarded funding for step-down

placements from Youth Development Centers. Hopefully these additional resources will help address this need and enhance eligibility for EFC for youth adjudicated delinquent.

- **Transition plans should be individualized to meet the needs of each young person and should contain the information needed for accessing the services and supports identified by and for the youth for a successful transition to adulthood.** It should function as an individualized “handbook” to facilitate successful transition to adulthood for each young adult and should be based on the young person’s goals, skills, needs and strengths. DCS needs to continue to monitor and train for timely and improved transition planning, and the Administrative Office of the Court should train foster care review boards regarding the importance of good transition planning.

Easily identifiable information regarding transitioning services should be available on a youth-friendly website. DCS should contract for this activity to provide a user-friendly url for the site, but DCS should include language in the contract to ensure it “owns” the url in the event of contract changes in the future. The url for this site should be shared with young people as part of transition planning, and state and community based organizations that serve former foster youth should share this site with young people. In addition to other information, the site should include information regarding how to access essential documents. DCS should also share a working phone number with the same group for young people who have no or limited access to the internet so they could contact DCS for service information, including how to replace essential documents, if needed. Discussions regarding the best strategies for development, funding and hosting of a website for youth is ongoing. TN DCS created a page on their website to provide Independent Living information. Essential documents, testimonials on Extension of Foster Care Services, including information about eligibility for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. The Independent Living webpage is broken into sections for youth and staff and contain all IL policies and guides. (<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/article/dcs-independent-living-services>)

Legal System Issues Recommendations

- **The Department of Children’s Services should** expand eligibility criteria for Extension of Foster Care to include other categories of youth eligible under the Federal Fostering Connections legislation. Those categories include youth who are working or participating in work activities 80 hours per month and need other assistance, including financial management, housing, transportation, etc.
- **Whenever safe and possible, youth in youth development centers should be stepped down to qualifying placements that make them eligible for extension of foster care services.** Appropriate transition plans should be made in sufficient time to facilitate such placements and connect youth with needed services and supports. Transition planning for youth in YDCs needs to begin early after admission as the average length of stay is about six months. As noted in the Accomplishments section, three agencies were awarded funding for step-down placements from Youth

Development Centers. Hopefully these additional resources will help address this need and enhance eligibility for EFC for youth adjudicated delinquent.

- **There is a need to increase the availability of model foster care review boards across the state where members have received special training regarding the needs of and resources for youth who are transitioning to adulthood.** Members of such foster care review boards can play a significant role in ensuring permanency and transition plans address the needs of youth who are transitioning to adulthood. Strategies used by model foster care review boards should be used by other foster care review boards to assist in their review of youth who are transitioning to adulthood. The AOC has an ongoing effort to develop model foster care review boards around the state. It is a lengthy process dependent solely on the cooperation and desire of the Juvenile Court Judge in that jurisdiction and availability of interested and qualified board members. In an effort to aid rural areas that have struggled to recruit certain professionals as board members, the AOC is developing manuals specific to each wellbeing component (i.e., health, education, etc.) to assist the boards with identifying barriers in each area and making quality recommendations to remove the barriers.
- **Peer advocates are important resources working with current and former foster youth and model foster care review boards. DCS and AOC currently have a five-year contract for the AOC to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates. Funding for peer advocates should be continued and their availability expanded.** Peer advocates help youth feel comfortable and supported in the foster care review process. DCS and the Administrative Office of the Courts should explore ways to increase the availability of peer advocates for foster youth and former foster youth and identify additional ways to adequately support peer advocates. In Fiscal Year 2013, DCS entered into a five-year \$55,500 per year contract with the Administrative Office of the Court to train, monitor and supervise peer advocates to work with Specialized Foster Care Review Boards. The contract established training requirements for peer advocates and included provisions to pay travel, per diem and stipends for the peer advocates. During Fiscal Year 2015, 13 peer advocates supported 812 foster youth at foster care review boards. Though the goal for this past year was to have a peer advocate assigned to each county that has a model foster care review board, this was not possible due to lack of sufficient funding.
- **TN DCS and the Tennessee Department of Safety should ensure the protocol for foster youth to get a photo id by age 16 provide a *free* photo id for all youth in foster care regardless of their age is implemented.** The Department of Children's Services and the Department of Safety and Homeland Security have instituted a protocol to provide a State issued photo identification for all foster youth 16 years and

older. While the process is now in place, there continues to be a need for consistent implementation, and there is a need to provide a free photo id for younger youth when needed.

- **Foster youth should be encouraged to register to vote when they are 18.** Research shows the earlier a person starts to vote, the more likely they are to continue to vote, and a photo id is required to vote. Foster youth should be encouraged to register to vote in person to ensure they are eligible to vote absentee if necessary in the first election after they are eligible to vote. Resource Centers and the YVLifeSet programs should encourage participants to register and vote.
- **Tennessee law needs an amendment to provide a mechanism for continuing judicial oversight for youth who were in custody in another state and are in Tennessee and otherwise eligible for receipt of Extension of Foster Care Services in order to facilitate their receipt of these services.** A mechanism is needed to ensure compliance with requirements for all young people who are eligibility for and receiving EFC services in Tennessee.
- **Juvenile Court Judges should be encouraged to appoint CASA volunteers for adolescents 14 and older, and even for older youth who are between ages 18 and 21.** As discussed throughout these recommendations, young adults who have been in foster care are still in need of connection to a caring adult.
- **The Department of Correction and Juvenile Court Judges should be encouraged to facilitate the continuation/development of strong bonds between children and their incarcerated parents,** especially mothers and daughters, as research indicates this is important for the success of both the children and their mothers.
- **Courts should ensure transitional permanency hearings occur and DCS legal services should file the pleadings necessary to ensure all factors to encourage successful transition to adulthood are addressed in transition plans and through other appropriate strategies.** Access to housing, educational services, employment, behavioral health services and other needed supports are important for successful transition to adulthood and reduce the likelihood of homelessness, unemployment and criminal justice system involvement.

Training Recommendations

- **Initial and ongoing training regarding the importance of assisting youth in making successful transitions to adulthood needs to be provided to a wide range of stakeholders that all have the potential for making a difference in encouraging**

positive outcomes for these vulnerable young adults. Training should include information about the availability of Fostering Connections/EFC and educational, legal and other services and supports that help young adults navigate the many barriers they face. In addition to the youth themselves, among the stakeholders who could benefit from such training are the following:

- Department of Children’s Services staff;
- Juvenile court judges and magistrates;
- Youth services officers and other juvenile court staff;
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs);
- Guardians ad Litem;
- Attorneys who practice in juvenile court;
- Foster care review board members;
- Foster parents;
- Residential provider agency staff;
- Mental health service providers;
- School guidance counselors/school social workers;
- Peer advocates; and
- Mentors for current/former foster youth.

As reported in the “Accomplishments” section, during fiscal year 2014, DCS trained 2,418 individuals. Whenever feasible, workshops regarding transitioning youth should be presented at appropriate regional and state conferences.

- **Juvenile court judges need ongoing training regarding the different authority they have related to youth who are receiving extended foster care services as young adults compared to youth under age 18 who are still in state custody or age 18 and still under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court for a delinquent adjudication.** While such training was provided at one point, this is an ongoing training need.

Implementation of new and continuing recommendations included in this report would represent an important step forward in providing the infrastructure needed to help young people who have been in state custody be successful. In general, the recommendations have not been prioritized, as they are interrelated, and there is not a single solution to the many challenges faced by these young adults. As the legal parent for young people who have been in state custody, it is the responsibility of the State of Tennessee, to provide the resources necessary for them to successfully transition to adulthood.

*Take in all the benefits from being in care-
Steven*

YTAC OVERVIEW/CONCLUSION

The Youth Transitions Advisory Council is made up of diverse and committed individuals dedicated to improving opportunities for youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Encompassing leaders from state child-serving agencies, private providers and statewide community service organizations, the Youth Transitions Advisory Council members work together to forge a new direction in meeting the needs of not only those youth aging out of foster care, but also youth facing mental health and developmental challenges that hinder their successful transition to adulthood and ability to reach their fullest potential.

The number of youth participating in Extension of Foster Care services increased for the fifth consecutive year while the number of youth aging out of state custody decreased for the fifth consecutive year. The rate of participation of those eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services rose from 20 percent in 2010 to 40 percent in 2014 and 48 percent in 2015.

The Education and Training Voucher, Bright Futures Scholarships and Hope Foster Care grants all had increased utilization; the Hope Foster Care grant increased from 52 in 2014 to 89 in 2015. In FY 2015, approximately 448 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET; 126 young adults receiving EFCS obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET; and 21 young adults, including 7 in EFCS, completed post-secondary educational goals.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) have begun two programs to serve transition age youth and young adults suffering from or at risk of serious emotional disturbance. The Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative will work with youth and young adults with or at risk of developing a serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder in improving their health and wellness, leading self-directed lives, and reaching their full potential. Healthy Transitions will focus on three priority populations: those in contact with the criminal justice system; those aging out of foster care; those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and those who identify as being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, or Intersex (LGBTQI). The Tennessee First Episode Psychosis Initiative will serve adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 30 experiencing psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, unusual thoughts or beliefs, or disorganized thinking, with symptoms present for more than a week but less than six months. Both programs will initially be available in the Northwest Region, provided by Carey Counseling, Inc. Tennessee Healthy Transitions will also serve youth in Hamilton county, through Volunteer Behavior Health.

These two new initiatives are in addition to the Treatment and Recovery for Youth (TRY) grant. Awarded in 2013, the TRY grant serves adolescents and young adults in Maury and Madison

counties who are suffering from substance abuse disorders. Through the first two years of the grant, TRY served approximately 165 youth and transition-age young adults using the Adolescent-Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA.)

Youth Villages Inc. continues to serve transition-age youth aging out of foster care. In 2014, through a partnership with Youth Villages, Tennessee became the first state in the nation to offer transitional services to all youth aging out of state custody. Results from a study of the Youth Villages program by Manpower Research Development Corporation (MRDC) found that participation in the program increased earnings by 17 percent, improved housing stability and economic well-being, decreasing the likelihood of homelessness by 22 percent. The program was renamed *YVLifeSet* in 2015.

Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA) have put increased emphasis on serving former foster youth due to their high risk of homelessness. THDA provided funding for four programs serving transition age youth: Monroe Harding, Oasis Center, Crossroads Campus and Omni Community Services. With funding from THDA, Crossville Housing Authority completed work on a four unit apartment to provide housing for youth aging out of state custody in the Upper Cumberland region.

Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the state organization for Court Appointed Special Advocate programs, completed work on a one-year National CASA Fostering Futures grant. TNCASA provided training manuals to local CASAs and facilitated “Train the Trainer” events. During the course of the grant, 56 CASA volunteers were trained, 42 local CASA staff participated, and 100 “Fostering Futures” manuals were provided.

Tennessee now has four Resource Centers in operation for youth aging out of foster care: Monroe Harding Youth Connections in Nashville, South Memphis Alliance in Memphis, Helen Ross McNabb Project Now in Knoxville, and the newest resource center in Chattanooga, I AM READY just completed its first year of operation. All four resource centers provide life skills, asset management training through the Opportunity Passport, sexual health education, employment assistance, and other services unique to the needs of transitioning youth.

The Tennessee General Assembly enacted Public Chapter 330 allowing foster parents or designated DCS staff to sign for financial responsibility so youth in care or aging out of care can obtain a driver license. Public Chapter 357 allows students in state custody, enrolling or transferring in the eleventh or twelve grades to graduate with the minimum number of state required credits, rather than a greater local requirement, increasing the opportunity for more foster youth to graduate on time with a high school diploma.

The information provided in this report demonstrates the commitment of the TN DCS and all participants with YTAC to improve outcomes for young people transitioning to adulthood.

TENNESSEE HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Activities and/or programs being undertaken by The Tennessee Housing Development Agency to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care include the following:

1. THDA Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grants were made to these agencies providing housing for youth aging out of foster care:
 - 2014 Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to the Crossville Housing Authority for new construction of a 4-plex of one bedroom apartments for youth aging out of foster care in Crossville. The grant amount was \$136,050. The units are located in walking distance or close proximity to post–secondary educational institutions, medical facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, discount stores and the Tennessee Career Center.

Youth residing in the apartments receive case management and supervised independent living services from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services. Services may include job placement assistance, vocational assessments, self- sufficiency skill training and transitional living services. The project was constructed on property already owned by the housing authority, and it was funded by the Housing Trust Fund grant, a zero percent loan made possible through the THDA/Tennessee Department of Revenue Community Investment Tax Credit Program, agency funds and donations.

Tenants receive Section 8 rental assistance and a homeless priority. The tenants also receive a living allowance through the Department of Children’s Services, and some are employed. The project is complete and fully occupied.

- 2015 Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Crossroads Campus for six beds of transitional housing for youth aging out of foster care and other at risk youth facing poverty and homelessness in Nashville. The program is a pet retail social enterprise providing job training for disadvantaged youth and adoptions for homeless dogs and cats at risk of euthanasia. Earned revenues from the pet shop help to sustain the program. The grant amount was \$159,877.

The project is funded by the Housing Trust Fund grant and private funds raised through fundraising efforts. Completion is anticipated by November 2015.

- 2012 Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant to Omni Community Services, Inc. The grant was originally awarded to provide 12 housing units to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The homes are to be located in Davidson, Maury, Benton, Madison, Shelby, Greene and Hamilton counties. The

homes acquired under the grant are typically single-family, three bedroom units and are occupied by three persons per home.

Omni Community Services works with special needs persons of all ages, including youth involved in the foster care system. A recent request was made to expand the scope of the grant to provide housing for youth aging out of foster care. Remaining grant amount at the time of the contract amendment was \$424,000. The Housing Trust Fund grant and agency funds are typically used to acquire existing properties that need little to no rehabilitation.

Completion of the project is anticipated by December 2015.

2. 2014 Emergency Solutions Grants to the following youth serving agencies for rapid re-housing, street outreach, and funds for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
 - Monroe Harding in Nashville. The grant amount was \$36,615 for rapid re-housing activities.
 - Oasis Center in Nashville. The grant amount was \$63,385 for street outreach, rapid re-housing, and funds for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Strategic Planning

The 2015 THDA strategic plan includes provisions to address the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care. A strategic implementation team is currently in the process of determining resources needed in order to execute the plan.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

Tennessee Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) has been very supportive of the extension of foster care services program from its inception. Tennessee CASA continues to support local CASA programs across the state in providing continuing education training to CASA volunteers in advocating for transitioning youth. National CASA's curriculum, *Fostering Futures: Supporting Youth Transitions into Adulthood*, focuses on the unique needs of transitioning youth. A one-year National CASA Fostering Futures grant, that ended August 31, 2015, allowed Tennessee CASA to provide the Fostering Futures training manuals to local CASA programs and facilitate "Train the Trainer" events, as well as Fostering Futures regional workshops. The grant funds were used for the purposes of increasing the number of CASA volunteers trained in the Fostering Futures curriculum and the number of older youth ages 14-21 served. Training more volunteers will lead to an increase in quality advocacy for transitioning youth and a greater number of youth accepting Extension of Foster Care Services. DCS Independent Living staff presented information about Extension of Foster Care Services at the Train the Trainer events and participated in some of the regional workshops. During the course of the grant, 56 CASA volunteers were trained in the Fostering Futures curriculum, 42 CASA staff members participated in Train the Trainer workshops and 100 Fostering Futures curriculum manuals were distributed.

Three local CASA programs, serving eight counties in Tennessee, were recently awarded Youth Advocacy Grants from National CASA. The grant funds will be used to train more CASA volunteers in the Fostering Futures curriculum and to provide support and supervision to volunteers being assigned older youth ages 14 – 21.

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

YOUTH TRANSITIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL DATA FROM DCS

➤ **Strategies to access and track effectiveness of Extension of Foster Care services and the operation of the Resource Centers**

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services provides Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program (CFCILP) services through its Independent Living Program (ILP), and monitors the provision of Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS). As a part of the federal mandate, this Division is charged with building a network of appropriate supports and services for youth transitioning out of care and for those who are likely to remain in care. The primary objectives of Tennessee's service network include helping to ensure ongoing connections with caring adults, the development of productive individuals within their communities, the acquisition and maintenance of gainful employment, the achievement of educational/vocational goals, and the availability of financial assistance and skills training for DCS youth and exiting young adults, as well as designing other resources to facilitate the transition to adulthood. Any youth, including those of Native American heritage, who have been, are or were in the custody of DCS and who meet eligibility criteria as outlined in policy, have the opportunity to request and access ILP services.

The Department's goal is to provide each young person in foster care, age 14 or older, with supports, services, experiences, and opportunities that are individualized based on the strengths and needs of each individual youth that are important to healthy adolescent development and that will help the youth successfully transition to adulthood. The strengths and needs of a 14-year-old who is four years from legal independence are generally different from those of a 17-year-old who is facing the imminent assumption of adult rights and responsibilities, and so the planning and services are tailored on that basis.

DCS uses Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program funds to staff Independent Living Program Specialists (ILPS) within each region of the state. The DCS ILPS work directly and collaboratively with Family Service Workers (FSW), foster parents, contracted providers and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development and ongoing consultation to agency staff, resource parents and youth. Although the primary function of the ILPS is to provide support and technical assistance to staff and resource adults, they also provide direct services and support to youth and young adults through life skills training classes, provisions of the Independent Living Allowance, assistance with financial aid (FAFSA), Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) and other scholarship applications, and support and coordination of statewide youth leadership boards (Youth-4-Youth).

Program Purposes for the next five years are:

- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 transition to self-sufficiency by providing services.
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment.
- Help youth likely to remain in foster care until age 18 prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions.
- Provide personal and emotional support to youth aging out of foster care through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.
- Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition into adulthood.
- Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education, to youth who have aged out of foster care.
- Provide services to youth who, after attaining 16 years of age, have left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption. Children and youth have the accessibility to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities. Tennessee is reexamining rules and regulations that have been developed to ensure appropriate supervision of younger children in foster care, but that are being applied to older youth in care in ways that are depriving them of age appropriate opportunities and experiences, to determine whether the rules and regulations are striking the proper balance between providing supervision and supporting healthy adolescent development. DCS ILPS and the Office of Child Permanency are focused on development of policies around Reasonable and Prudent Parenting for foster parents and congregate care setting staff and will put a priority on normalcy.

The Department of Children’s Services continues to be committed to data-driven decision making. DCS continued to measure specific variables over the past fiscal year, including completion of transitional surveys and ongoing work to identify uptake and retention rates for Extension of Foster Care Services. TN DCS Independent Living team has been focused in developing resources and supports to meet the DCS strategic goal 1.5, “Ensure youth have the resources and support needed to successfully transition to adulthood.”

Identification of Extension of Foster Care Services uptake and retention rates is described in a subsequent section. The Transitional Survey functions in TFACTS were overhauled for the custody age 17-19 and Extension of Foster Care versions, creating options that are more streamlined, easier for staff to complete, and better designed to capture the most relevant data. Data on Transitional Survey completion (custody age 17-19 version) is added as a new section, below. The ability to accurately capture monthly face-to-face contact with the EFCS population is still not available.

Transitional Survey Custody Age 17-19 Monitoring:

Ensuring that 90 percent or more of youth discharged from foster care because they reached the age of 18 shall have at least one of the following apply at the time of discharge: earned a GED, graduated from high school, enrolled in high school or college or alternative approved educational program for special needs children, currently enrolled in vocational training or employed full time.

There were 474 young people adjudicated Dependent/Neglect in TN DCS custody when they reached their 18th birthday (“Aged out”) in 2014. Of those, 37 were on runaway status at the time they turned 18. For the remaining 437 young people, the TAC monitoring staff, working collaboratively with the Department’s Quality Control (QC) and other Central Office staff, gathered information on the extent to which each young person met at least one of the achievement measures. The review was based on information generated by the new Transitional Survey and supplemented by an examination of the youth’s TFACTS case file. TN DCS now receives reports to help to increase completion percentages and increase compliance with Brian A. outcomes standards.

As reflected in the data below, 388 (89 percent) of the youth met one of the Settlement Agreement’s achievement measures upon aging out.

Number of Children who Aged Out in 2014 and met an Achievement Measure:

Enrolled in High School or GED	273 (62%)
Obtained High School Diploma or GED	96 (22%)
Adult Service Transition	8 (2%)
Full-Time Employment or Vocational Training	7 (2%)
Enrolled in Post-Secondary	4 (1%)

Source: TFACTS Transitional Survey Monthly Reports, January through December 2014, and transitional survey case file review. Brian A Monitors report.

TN DCS will continue to promote educational opportunities for youth in custody and those who leave custody at an older age. During FY 2014, approximately 389 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, 126 young adults receiving EFCS obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, and nine young adults completed post-secondary educational goals.

During FY 2015, approximately 448 youth in custody obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, 126 young adults receiving EFCS obtained a high school diploma, GED or HiSET, and 21 young adults completed post-secondary educational goals. Fourteen of the 21 were not in EFCS and 7 were in EFCS. Below are the colleges they graduated from in FY 2015.

Non EFCS

Miller Motte Technical College
Pellissippi State Community College
Walter State Community College
Middle Tennessee State University
Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Chatanooga
East Tennessee State University
Northeast State Community College
Tennessee Technological University
Tennessee College of Applied Technology -Dickson
Austin Peay State University
University of Tennessee-Knoxville

EFCS

Miller-Motte Technical College
Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Morristown
Ultimate Medical Academy
Paul Mitchell School

➤ **Feedback from DCS Older Youth in Care Survey**

The Department’s Office of Independent Living, in consultation with the TAC, conducted a survey of older youth in foster care, asking those youth (a) to provide information on the extent to which they have had opportunities and activities related to key independent living skills and competencies and (b) to assess their level of competence in each key area.

The key areas of focus on the one page survey included home care (shopping, cleaning and cooking), finance, getting around (transportation), housing, jobs, and post-secondary education. The survey also asked about opportunities that the young person had to participate in extracurricular activities, to make friends and socialize, to develop and pursue a hobby or special interest, or attend life skills classes. Most of the survey questions that asked about whether a young person had a particular experience or opportunity provided the young person with three choices: “a lot,” “one, two or a few times,” or “never.” The questions related to extracurricular activities, hobbies and interests, and opportunities to make friends and socialize had four choices: “lots,” “sometimes,” “not a lot,” and “never.” Questions about particular skill areas also asked young people to indicate their level of confidence in their ability to perform the task or apply the skill. Three response options were provided: “I’ve got this,” “some idea,” or “clueless.”

The survey was distributed to children in custody ages 13-17 (through their case managers, IL staff, foster care review boards and private providers) beginning on October 7, 2014. The survey results included all completed survey forms received by November 14, 2014.

For purposes of this monitoring report, the TAC focused on the responses received from the 221 class members who were 17 years old at the time they completed the survey. (There were 540 class members in custody in October 2014 who were age 17.)

Most of the 17-year-old respondents indicated that they have had experience completing basic household chores and tasks and that they feel confident in their abilities in this area. Very few expressed lack of experience or capacity in the area of home care. Two-thirds of the 17-year-old respondents reported some experience completing a budget, and a higher proportion reported some confidence in their skill level in this area. About one-third of respondents reflected having a savings or checking account; however, 75 percent reported at least some confidence in this area. Most young people reflected little or no experience or confidence in the area of getting their credit score.

Eighty percent of the 17-year-old respondents reported some experience learning to drive, and almost 90 percent reported some confidence in this area. About one-third indicated experience getting a driver's license, and about two-thirds reported experience with car maintenance. Over 75 percent reflected having some confidence about their abilities in these two areas. About two-thirds of young people had some experience using public transportation, and almost 80 percent reported some confidence in their abilities.

Most 17-year-old respondents reported little experience relevant to securing housing, but a majority expressed some level of confidence in their ability to find housing and fill out a housing application. Over 80 percent of the 17-year-old respondents reported that they had some experience finding and applying for a job, and over 90 percent had some confidence in their ability to do so. About 60 percent had some experience interviewing for a job and writing a resume, and a significant majority had some comfort level in each of these areas.

Half of the 17-year-olds surveyed reported some experience locating and applying to a college or vocational school, and 75 percent had some comfort level with the process. Less than a third had experience applying for financial aid, but about two-thirds had some confidence in their ability to navigate the process.

Over half of the respondents provided positive opportunities for social involvement. Almost three-fourths reported pursuing hobbies and interests "lots" or "sometimes," and 85 percent reported opportunities to spend time with friends at those frequencies.

Source of this information is the Brian A. Monitor's Report.

Tennessee DCS provides a survey to youth that are exiting out of Extension of Foster Care Services. It is not a mandatory survey, but can help TN DCS understand areas of strengths and areas to improve upon. The sample in the survey is 25 students. The following questions are examples of what is asked.

1. Do you feel that you received quality case management services during your time in foster care?
88 percent reported they agreed and strongly agreed.
2. Were you provided assistance with researching school, applying for scholarships, or other tasks related to plans to education?
88 percent reported they agreed and strongly agreed.
3. Did your case manager ask you to participate in any youth leadership workshops or other related events?
66 percent reported they agreed and strongly agreed.
4. Did you receive a visit from your assigned case manager at least once every 30 days?
82 percent reported they agreed and strongly agreed.
5. Do you have a supportive adult who will continue to help you?
95 percent reported yes, they do have a supportive adult.
6. Would you recommend Extension of Foster Care Services to other youth?
78 percent said “yes” and 16 percent were uncertain.
7. Were you satisfied with the overall outcome of your court hearings?
88 percent reported they were satisfied.

Source of this is EFCS exit survey.

➤ **Strategies for maintaining accurate numbers of young adults served by Extension of Foster Care**

In addition to using TFACTS data, Independent Living Program Specialists maintain data that demonstrates overall provision of Extension of Foster care services via a monthly report that is submitted to Central Office. This report includes certain identifying information on the clients and dates of service. The monthly reports are compiled upon the conclusion of each fiscal year to produce each year’s data. Data reported for youth in custody is derived from TFACTS system records. A significant effort to increase the capacity to derive data from TFACTS was the “Fostering Connections” enhancement project. This functionality enhancement, which was implemented in October 2013 along with a conversion of data, now allows the creation of system records that accurately establish programmatic and IV-E eligibility for the Extension of Foster Care population and streamlines the way services are provided to the young adults. These

enhancements will ultimately eliminate the need for staff to track data manually (this report is still under development), allows the Department to claim IV-E reimbursement and ensures greater fiscal internal controls. These enhancements also included fixes to TFACTS functionality related to establishing subsidy record, and the capability to accurately claim IV-E reimbursement for eligible adopted youth and youth who exited custody to subsidized permanent guardianship. (Note: A set of data related to length of stay in Extension of Foster Care Services is included in this year's report, in Section 4.)

➤ **The number of services provided by the Department of Children's Services;**

**Services Available to Youth in State Custody
and Those Who Receive Extension of Foster Care Services**

1	Post-Secondary Application Fees
2	Testing Fees (SAT, ACT, GED)
3	Tutoring
4	Educational fees
5	Independent Living Class Stipend (to Support Life Skills Instruction)
6	Graduation Package
7	Yearbooks
8	Membership/Activity Fees for Extracurricular or Leadership Activities
9	Senior Event-Related Transportation
10	Honor/Senior Class Trip (School Related Activity)
11	Housing Application/Fees for Post Custody
12	Materials/Uniforms for Vocational Studies
13	Completion of Job Readiness Training
14	Job Start-Up Costs
15	Driver's Education Class Fees
16	Driver's Testing Fees
17	Car Insurance
18	Transportation Grant
19	Car Repairs
20	Housing Related Fees
21	Tools/Equipment (Technical/Vocational Programs)
22	Other Special Needs Unique to Youth Services
23	Child Care Assistance
24	Youth Leadership Stipend
25	Independent Living Allowance
26	Educational and Training Voucher (Scholarship)
27	Bright Futures (State Funded) Scholarship
28	YVLifeSet (Youth Villages Transitional Living Program)

29	Opportunity Passport™ (per the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative) - Provided Via the Resource Centers
30	Placement Services
31	Case Management
32	Household Furnishings

➤ **The number of young adults who received these services during FY 2014-15 and length of stay in EFCS**

TN DCS provides youth aging out of state custody services through multiple sources. This is based on their eligibility, and services are provided by TN DCS as well as through TN DCS contracts with private providers and community agencies.

Services Provided:

- YVLifeSet (formerly Transitional Living): 865 Individuals/881 Episodes.
- Resource Centers: 190 New Youth Served.
- Extension of Foster Care Services: 714 Individuals/739 EFCS Episodes.

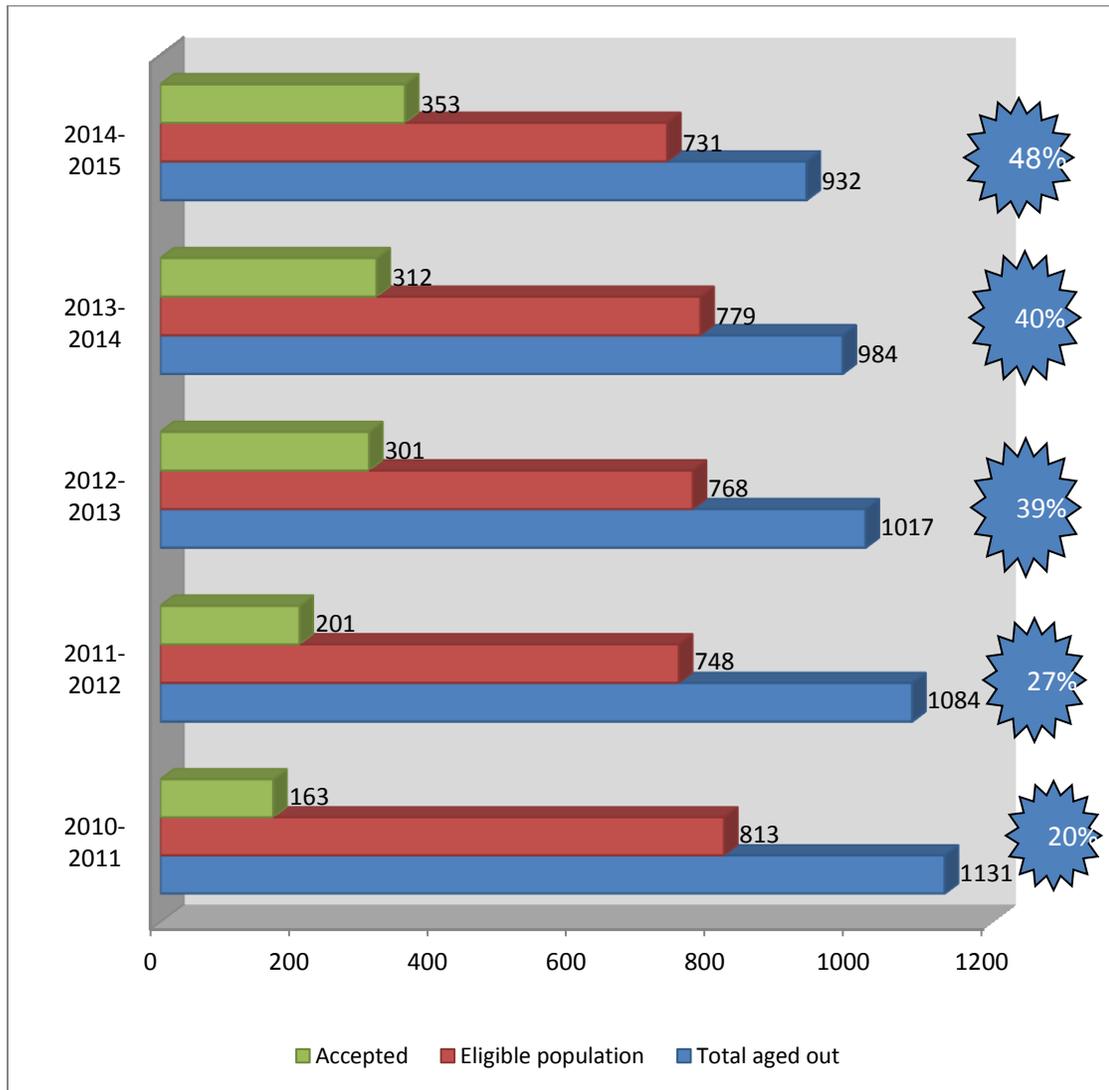
Sources: Grantee Reports, Independent Living Monthly Report, Independent Living Scholarship Report

FY 2014 EFCS Retention: Days in EFCS

In FY 2014, the mean (days) was 231 days, median (days) was 165. In 2015, the mean days was 255 days, TN DCS will continue to evaluate supports needed to increase retention of youth in Extension of Foster Services. TN IL does know that the two main reasons for termination of services are youth not maintaining academic eligibility, and youth requesting termination of services. TN DCS IL has held two webinars around “EFCS Quality Case Management” to help EFCS staff improve their engagement and practice with the young adult population.

Region	Mean (Days)	Median (Days)	Mode (Days)
Northwest	256	136	70
Southwest	207	118	0
Shelby	362	296	0
Davidson	231	122	34
Mid Cumberland	181	152	35
South Central	196	147	127
Upper Cumberland	268	179	35
Northeast	366	318	0
Knox	199	146	389
East	219	116	0
Smoky Mountain	253	190	64
Tennessee Valley	315	157	154
Total (Days)	255	170	35

The following displays the Post Custody/Extension of Foster Care uptake rate for prior and current years:



➤ **Program Exits**

The following represent the circumstances by which young adults leave extended foster care, which are captured for reporting purposes:

- Successful Completion of Educational Program;
- Voluntary Termination of Services (Self Termination);
- Transition to Adult Services;
- Unable to Locate;
- Academic Ineligibility;

- Risk to Self or Others (example: committing a violent crime, which is in violation of the Rights and Responsibilities Agreement young adults sign when accepting extension of foster care services).;
- Turned Age 21;

	Successful	Self Termination	Transition to Adult Services	Unable to Locate	Academic Ineligibility	Risk to Self or Others	Turned Age 21
Northwest	3	9	2	0	20	0	1
Southwest	0	2	1	4	19	0	0
Shelby	0	9	4	1	28	1	4
Davidson	1	9	2	3	12	0	4
Mid Cumberland	4	11	4	7	36	1	2
South Central	0	4	1	4	16	1	0
Upper Cumberland	2	4	4	0	16	0	3
Northeast	3	1	3	1	14	2	3
Knox	2	14	4	4	7	0	2
East	0	4	1	6	6	1	1
Smoky Mtn.	4	9	0	8	6	1	4
TN Valley	1	7	4	8	16	0	2
Totals	20	83	30	46	196	7	26

The primary service offered when young adults transition from extended foster care, other than Transition to Adult Services, is the YVLifeSet (formerly Transitional Living) Grant service. Young adults whose extended foster care services were terminated due to academic in-eligibility are often assisted by Transitional Living with re-establishing a viable educational plan, and may return to request extended foster care prior to turning age 21. Young adults who transition to adult services have SSI established and are then receiving mental health and behavioral health services in coordination with the state’s Medicaid program, TennCare, or services through the state’s Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. One-hundred twenty-six young adults did complete their HiSet or high school diploma in FY 2015, but may be categorized as another exit type due to furthering their education or self-termination.

➤ **The number of youth who exited state custody and received scholarship assistance from DCS to continue into post-secondary educational programs during FY 2014-2015:**

The Department offers young adults who were in foster care or who are in foster care on their 18th birthday the opportunity to continue to receive a variety of supports and services beyond age 18 to help them successfully transition to adulthood. The Department of Children’s Services is the sole administrator of Education and Training Vouchers. The Office of Independent Living has a Scholarship Administrator who manages the ETV funds available and State Funded Scholarship. ETV applicants are required to provide documentation of total cost of attendance and the financial aid package for the programs they are enrolled in to the Scholarship Coordinator who reviews this information and established ETV awards accordingly. DCS is able to provide an unduplicated number of ETV’s awarded each year. The program will continue looking at ways to maximize the impact of funding and involving

communities and individual colleges and universities in providing increased opportunities for this population. Data is currently being reviewed to help determine fluctuations in ETV awards, identify the factors affecting this and inform strategies for maximizing utilization. The Bright Futures State Funded Scholarship awarded through the Governor’s Office will continue in the coming year, and \$500,000 is the amount the State Legislature has allocated toward this program.

In FY 2015, youth had a significant increase in use of scholarships through DCS. DCS IL did outreach to the population that was adopted or went to SPG over the last two years.

Tennessee Promise has also been a factor in the increase.

2014	ETV	State	Total
Tennessee 4 Year University	52	36	88
Tennessee Community Colleges	113	70	183
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology	17	24	41
University of Tennessee System	19	9	22
Private 4 Year Colleges	35	0	35
Non State Technical Colleges	32	0	32
Total	262	139	401
2015	ETV	State	Total
Tennessee 4 Year University	66	38	104
Tennessee Community Colleges	166	69	235
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology	39	29	68
University of Tennessee System	11	9	20
Private 4 Year Colleges	38	0	38
Non State Technical Colleges	37	0	37
Total	357	145	502

Source: Independent Living Scholarship Report

➤ **Number of children in state custody during FY 2014-15**

Overview	
Total Children in Custody	13,934
Adjudication	
Dependent/Neglect	11,202
Unruly	300
Not Listed	198
Delinquent	2,234
Gender	
Male	7,944
Female	5,990
Age Range	
0-12	7,419
13-19	6,515
Race	
White	10,425
Black/African American	3,345
Multi-Racial	68
Asian	26
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	25
Nat. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	21
Unable to Determine	11
Missing	13

Children by Adjudication, Gender, and Age Group							
Adjudication	Total	Female			Male		
		0-12	13-19	Total	0-12	13-19	Total
Dependent/Neglect	11,202	3,457	1,962	5,419	3,811	1,972	5,783
Unruly	300	3	129	132	4	164	168
Not Listed	198	69	35	104	59	35	94
Delinquent	2,234	2	333	335	9	1,890	1,899
Statewide	13,934	3,531	2,459	5,990	3,883	4,061	7,944

Children by Region and Age Range			
		Age Range	
Region	Total	0-12	13-19
Davidson	864	336	528
East TN	987	539	448
Knox	1,182	838	344
Mid Cumberland	1,506	663	843
Northeast	1,292	749	543
Northwest	820	483	337
Shelby	1,496	715	781
Smoky Mountain	1,365	804	561
South Central	933	349	584
Southwest	688	339	349
TN Valley	1,285	664	621
Upper Cumberland	1,473	909	564
Missing	43	31	12
Statewide Total	13,934	7,419	6,515

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

By Region:

Northwest	47
Southwest	40
Shelby	85
Davidson	59
Mid Cumberland	93
South Central	51
Upper Cumberland	57
Northeast	51
East	35
Smoky Mountain	65
Tennessee Valley	79
Knox	52

- **Number of EFCS young adults served FY 2015 broken down by adjudication, gender, race/ethnicity, region/county;**

Total Individuals Served: 714

Adjudication (at time exiting DCS custody):

- Dependent/Neglected: 566;
- Unruly: 24;
- Delinquent: 124;

Gender:

- Female: 369;
- Male: 345;

Race/Ethnicity:

- American Indian/Alaska Native: 5;
- Asian: 3;
- Black/African American: 229;
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 1;
- White: 470;
- Unable to Determine: 6;
- Additional Hispanic/Latino Designation: 41.

By County:

County	Number of EFCS Episodes	Number of Young Adults Served
ANDERSON	10	9
BEDFORD	3	3
BENTON	1	1
BLOUNT	25	25
BRADLEY	18	16
CAMPBELL	2	2
CANNON	3	3
CARTER	1	1
CHEATHAM	6	6
CHESTER	3	3
CLAIBORNE	5	4
CLAY	1	1
COCKE	3	3
COFFEE	3	3
CROCKETT	1	1
CUMBERLAND	8	8
DAVIDSON	59	58
DEKALB	3	3
DICKSON	7	7
DYER	7	7
FAYETTE	3	2
FENTRESS	4	4
FRANKLIN	7	7
GIBSON	9	9
GILES	11	11
GRAINGER	2	2
GREENE	10	10
GRUNDY	1	1
HAMBLEN	10	10
HAMILTON	41	40
HARDEMAN	2	2
HARDIN	3	3
HAWKINS	7	7
HAYWOOD	2	2
HENDERSON	3	3
HENRY	5	5

HICKMAN	1	1
HOUSTON	1	1
HUMPHREYS	3	3
JACKSON	1	1
JEFFERSON	11	11
KNOX	52	51
LAUDERDALE	5	5
LAWRENCE	9	8
LINCOLN	4	3
LOUDON	4	3
MACON	6	5
MADISON	14	14
MARION	3	3
MARSHALL	6	6
MAURY	7	7
MCMINN	14	12
MCNAIRY	3	3
MEIGS	4	4
MONROE	7	7
MONTGOMERY	29	26
MORGAN	3	3
OBION	3	3
OVERTON	3	3
PERRY	1	1
PICKETT	1	1
POLK	3	3
PUTNAM	10	10
RHEA	1	1
ROANE	7	6
ROBERTSON	10	10
RUTHERFORD	25	22
SCOTT	1	1
SEQUATCHIE	1	1
SEVIER	11	11
SHELBY	88	87
SMITH	3	3
STEWART	2	2
SULLIVAN	14	13
SUMNER	7	7

TIPTON	3	3
TROUSDALE	1	1
UNICOI	7	7
UNION	2	2
VANBUREN	1	1
WARREN	9	9
WASHINGTON	13	13
WAYNE	2	2
WEAKLEY	7	7
WHITE	6	5
WILLIAMSON	7	7
WILSON	14	13
	739	714

Source: Independent Living Monthly Report

- The following describes the number of youth who received independent living wraparound services FY 2015.

Independent Living Wraparound Services Custodial Population 2013-15:

Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2013-2014	Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2014-2015	Total Youth Served 2013-2014	Total Youth Served 2014-2015	Total Expenditure 2013-2014	Total Expenditure 2014-15
399	463	234	285	\$46,342.82	\$56,623.88

Service	Instances of Service Provided 2013-2014	Instances of Service Provided 2014-2015	Youth Served 2013-2014	Youth Served 2014-2015	Expenditure 2013-2014	Expenditure 2014-2015
Drivers Education	29	26	28	25	\$9,684.00	\$8,700.00
Drivers Testing Fees	1	0	1	0	\$20.00	\$0.00
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/ Membership Fees	6	29	6	28	\$321.00	\$5,757.68
Good Grades Incentive	65	88	58	80	\$2,540.00	\$3,570.00
Graduation Package	144	128	99	97	\$21,234.34	\$18,899.14
Honor/ Senior Class Trip	7	8	7	7	\$871.00	\$1,770.00
Housing Application Fees (Post-Secondary)	12	19	12	16	\$2,350.00	\$3,075.00
IL Class Stipend	1	22	1	22	\$50.00	\$1,075.00
Materials for Vocational Studies	3	0	2	0	\$445.92	\$0.00
Other Special Needs	19	14	16	14	\$3,240.06	\$3,644.07
Post-Secondary Application/ Registration Fees	47	48	37	34	\$1,545.00	\$1,805.00
Senior Event Transportation	1	0	1	0	\$20.00	\$0.00
Educational Fees	2	5	2	5	\$390.00	\$2,953.99

Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	30	28	23	26	\$1,380.50	\$1,215.50
Tutoring	5	7	3	3	\$390.00	\$982.50
Yearbooks	27	31	27	30	\$1,861.00	\$2,326.00
Youth Leadership Stipend	0	10	0	9	\$0.00	\$850.00
Total	399	463	*234	*286	\$46,342.82	\$56,623.88

Independent Living Wraparound Services Extension of Foster Care Population 2013-15:

Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2013-2014	Total IL Wrap Services Provided 2014-2015	Total Youth Served 2013-2014	Total Youth Served 2014-2015	Total Expenditure 2013-2014	Total Expenditure 2014-2015
257	375	145	191	\$34,733.03	\$56,525.79

Service	Instances of Service Provided 2013-2014	Instances of Service Provided 2014-2015	Youth Served 2013-2014	Youth Served 2014-2015	Expenditure 2013-2014	Expenditure 2014-2015
Auto Insurance	11	13	10	12	\$3,300.00	\$3,710.94
Drivers Education	11	23	11	23	\$3,695.00	\$8,045.00
Drivers Testing Fees	0	0	0	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Educational Fees	2	4	2	3	\$660.00	\$932.00
Extra-Curricular Leadership Activity/ Membership Fees	4	22	4	17	\$191.00	\$2,639.33
Good Grades Incentive	1	14	1	12	\$30.00	\$619.00
Graduation Package	78	83	59	62	\$11,349.34	\$11,588.52
Honor/Senior Class Trip	10	2	10	2	\$1,360.00	\$175.00
Household Furnishings	0	3	0	2	\$0.00	\$1,215.00

Housing Application Fees (Post-Secondary)	18	15	17	15	\$2,875.00	\$2,855.00
IL Class Stipend	1	6	1	6	\$50.00	\$225.00
Materials for Vocational Studies	0	1	0	1	\$0.00	\$133.15
Non Recurring Housing Start Up	9	25	7	20	\$3,294.00	\$8,723.04
Other Special Needs	9	25	8	20	\$1,165.74	\$6,619.59
Post-Secondary Application Registration Fees	30	30	21	25	\$1,370.00	\$1,760.00
Senior Event Transportation	3	0	3	0	\$75.00	\$0.00
Testing fees (GED, SAT, ACT)	16	13	13	11	\$1,311.50	\$822.00
Transportation Grant	19	45	15	29	\$902.40	\$2,345.50
Tutoring	2	1	1	1	\$500.00	\$50.00
Vehicle Repairs	3	5	3	5	\$1,105.05	\$1,410.56
Yearbooks	14	15	14	15	\$899.00	\$968.00
Youth Leadership Stipend	16	30	12	22	\$600.00	\$1,689.16
Total	133	375	145*	191*	\$34,733.03	\$56,525.79

***These are not sums, they are totals**

***These are individual youth served; some youth received more than one type of service during FY 2015.**

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS

➤ **Number of youth who decline continuation of foster care services and the reasons given for declining the services**

The Tennessee DCS Independent Living Youth Engagement Lead position started in FY 2014. The Youth Engagement Lead was tasked with contacting aged-out youth who did not accept services. Youth Engagement Lead attempted to make contact with over 500 young adults. The main reasons young people gave for not accepting EFCS continued to be:

1. Wanting to work instead of attend a post secondary program.
2. Undecided about future plans.
3. Did not want to be involved with DCS.
4. Were on Runaway
5. Moved to another state.
6. Came into care late into their 17th year.

Then DCS Youth Engagement lead position handled many inquires through the year. This position submitted seven YVLifeSet referrals, four referrals to Opportunity Passport, two referrals to EFCS, made seven Community Resource referrals and five referrals to TennCare. three young adults were referred to us by homeless shelters to assist with improving circumstances. The Youth Engagement Lead reached out to homeless shelters across the state. The Youth Engagement Lead will continue to respond to all calls/emails coming in from the community that are routed to the Office of Independent Living from youth, young adults and other stakeholders to assist youth and young adults with any needed resources. This role did outreach efforts to young adults who may be eligible for TennCare through the Affordable Care Act due to aging out of foster care and tried to contact over 300 young people. DCS IL has a new phone number, 844-887-7277, to create improved communication.

One specific group that continues to be less likely to accept Extension of Foster Care services is young people who are adjudicated delinquent. Of the all youth eligible for Extension of Foster Care Services who aged out during FY 2015, eight percent of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted Extension of Foster Care Services, compared to 39 percent of dependent/neglected youth. IL did see a one percent increase, but more can be done.

DCS IL met with the regional IL Coordinators to provide ongoing regional training for staff working with youth adjudicated delinquent. In the previous report, input from the youth was gathered by these regional staff. Three issues were identified among youth from the juvenile justice system: 1) They were more likely to view custody as punitive and, therefore, were less likely to want voluntary services, 2) Unlike many dependent/neglected youth, many of these young people had families to return to as adults, and 3) Some “myths” around eligibility for youth who are in the juvenile justice system continue to exist among staff. To address this, specific training was delivered to juvenile justice and youth development center

staff. Per their request, handouts specific to the eligibility of juvenile justice youth were developed and disseminated.

Identifying better ways to serve young people adjudicated delinquent and placed at the Youth Development Centers is another opportunity. DCS developed an RFP for step down services for youth exiting youth development centers and released the RFP during the first quarter of fiscal year 2015. Three agencies in 2015 were granted the step-down, Monroe Harding, G4S and Meridian Behavioral Health (group effort). This will help youth step down from YDC's timelier.

During FY 2015, 48 percent of the total eligible aged-out population of youth accepted Extension of Foster Care services; 39 percent of dependent/neglected youth, two percent of unruly youth and 8 percent of eligible juvenile justice youth accepted Extension of Foster Care Services.

Extension Of Foster Care Services Uptake by Region:

Region	Aged Out	Aged out Eligible	Accepted EFCS	% EFCS Uptake
Davidson	91	63	28	44%
East	40	32	18	56%
Knox	53	44	26	59%
Mid Cumberland	125	113	45	39%
Northeast	71	60	20	33%
Northwest	46	43	21	49%
Shelby	136	80	41	51%
Smoky Mountain	83	72	40	56%
South Central	82	68	28	41%
Southwest	51	42	20	48%
TN Valley	96	63	39	62%
Upper Cumberland	58	51	27	53%
Total	932	731	353	48%

Source: Tennessee Department of Children's Services – TFACTS and Independent Living Monthly Report

- **Number of young adults receiving Extension of Foster Care Services who were in foster care placement, supervised independent living arrangements and other placement arrangements**

EFC youth in foster care placements at some point during FY 2015	316
EFC youth receiving the Independent Living Allowance during FY 2015	444

Extension of Foster Care Placements (Note that some individual young adults received more than one type of placement service during FY 2015):

EFCS Placement Service	Number Young Adults Served
IL Allowance Extension of Foster Care	444
Contract Foster Care Extension of Foster Care	140
DCS Foster Care Extension of Foster Care	76
Independent Living Residential Extension of Foster Care	35
Level 3 Continuum Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	25
Level 2 Continuum Extension of Foster Care	16
Level 3 Extension of Foster Care	10
Level 4 Special Needs Extension of Foster Care	6
Level 2 Congregate Care Extension of Foster Care	5
Level 2 Special Needs - Mental Retardation Treatment EFC	1
Level 3 Continuum Extension of Foster Care	1
Level 4 Extension of Foster Care	1
Total Individuals Served	665
42 Had No EFCS Placement	
6 Had EFCS Placements/Payments Ended Prior to EFCS End Date	
1 Had Placement Payment Started 7/1/15	

Source: Tennessee Department of Children’s Services – Independent Living Monthly Report,

The Department of Children’s Services continues to be focused heavily on implementation of the federal Fostering Connections Act and Tennessee’s Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act. The Department focused heavily on training efforts, increased outreach to young people, youth engagement to improve practice, increased services (paid and non-paid life skills development), increased housing opportunities and overcoming barriers to serving special populations.

The Office of Independent Living continued to provide training, as follows:

Training Group	Participants Trained
DCS	1193
Provider Agency	284
Foster Parents	246
Court	40
Mixed Group	318
School	158
Youth	30
Total	2269

The Department of Children’s Services coordinated Youth Leadership Academies and Youth 4 Youth Board meetings in collaboration with community based partners in all three Grand Regions.

2014

Region	Y4Y meeting	Attendance	Avg. attendance
East	11	202	17
Middle	1	8	
West	11	161	12

2015

Region	Y4Y meeting	Attendance	Avg. attendance
East	13	249	19
Middle	8	81	10
West	12	169	15

The Department of Children’s Services is implementing two grants to improve services to pregnant and parenting youth in foster care. One grant, the Federal Personal Responsibility Education Program, has been used to implement the evidence-based pregnancy prevention Teen Outreach Program® in selected congregate care settings, and the initial results are promising. DCS has expanded the grant to utilize the Sisters Saving Sisters curriculum. Monroe Harding supports Sisters Saving Sisters, a skill-based program designed to reduce the risk of unprotected sexual intercourse among sexually experienced Latino and African-American adolescent females. The program provides culturally and developmentally-appropriate small group sessions that focus on HIV and sexually transmitted disease (STD) risk reduction. The Center for the Study of Social Policy awarded Tennessee a grant to target the unique needs of pregnant and parenting youth in foster care in Knox County. This grant ended in 2014, but DCS will review best practices in this region and work with other DCS regions to ensure DCS is meeting the needs of this population.

Over the last 10 years, Tennessee enacted foster care reforms that have resulted, among other things, in a reduction in its reliance on congregate care. However, at times, abused, neglected or delinquent youth need residential treatment. An innovative public-private partnership, the Youth Development Learning Collaborative, is improving residential care providers’ ability to provide

the supports, opportunities and adult relationships that promote optimal growth and development.

Beginning in early 2012, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services, the University Of Tennessee Center Of Excellence for Children in State Custody and Oasis Center launched the Youth Development Learning Collaboratives to disseminate Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP®) to Level 2 and 3 congregate care facilities in Tennessee. TOP® is an evidence-based youth development approach designed to help adolescents develop life skills, healthy behaviors and a sense of purpose. Key elements of TOP® include:

- Twice weekly curriculum-guided discussion groups that are active and engaging and in which youth do most of the talking.
- A significant amount of time spent in youth-driven community service learning projects, at least 20 hours in a four month period.
- Caring adult staff who believe in youth and help them build on their strengths.

TOP® has proven effective in increasing graduation rates and reducing teen pregnancies and other negative behaviors among program participants. Furthermore, TOP® helps congregate care providers “normalize” their settings by engaging youth in experiential learning, healthy risk-taking and everyday activities that promote growth and development. TOP® provides youth with experiences, not explanations. From March 2012 to April 2014, more than 1,300 youth residing in Tennessee congregate care homes participated in TOP®, contributing nearly 12,000 hours of service to Tennessee communities. TOP® youth have:

- Held bake sales and car washes to raise money for animal shelters in Upper Cumberland;
- Knitted soft caps for children in Knoxville who have lost their hair due to chemotherapy;
- Made blankets for a homeless women’s drop-in center in Upper East Tennessee;
- Helped build homes with Habitat for Humanity in Crossville.

Preliminary data and anecdotal reports indicate implementation of TOP® is helping providers meet key outcomes for youth, i.e., reduction of days in congregate care, increases in permanent exits from care, and reduction of reentries into care.

Tennessee providers currently implementing TOP® are Florence Crittenton Agency, Group Effort, Holston Home, Madison Oaks Academy, Monroe Harding, OmniVisions, Porter-Leath, UCHRA and Youth Villages (Nashville). By fall 2016, it is projected that more than 4,000 youth will have been engaged in TOP®.

DCS conducted three youth panels that spoke to over 100 participants. Commissioner Henry met with youth at a DCS Children’s Forum and youth who are receiving Transitional Living Services and who are also participating in the YV Scholars Program (a Youth Villages’ program where

young people participating in Transitional Living are awarded college scholarships, provided they maintain academic and community service requirements).

The Performance Accountability Review (PAR) Unit is utilizing a review tool to evaluate private providers to better assess whether independent living and transition planning goals from the youth's permanency plan are incorporated into the youth's individual treatment plans. The Office of Independent Living is reviewing PAR reports to determine whether agencies need additional technical assistance in the areas of planning for our youth. Provider agencies are scored and offered assistance if scores are below a certain threshold. The Well-Being Domain of the PAR report includes the "Health Services Provision," "Independent Living," and "Transitional Living" indicators. "Independent Living" and "Transitional Living" is monitored for treatment services to address assessed needs for age appropriate youth. This review helps Independent Living pursue ongoing improvement efforts with provider agencies and ensure youth with identified needs and strengths are getting activities associated with life skills development and preparation for adulthood.

Opportunities:

- One of the biggest challenges for the Department of Children's Services continues to be transitioning those youth with serious special needs. New policy provides an opportunity to continue services to these youth and bridge them to appropriate adult services during a critical time period. While this option is available, it is voluntary, and many young people most in need of the services do not wish to accept them. DCS is implementing a centralized review and monitoring process for these young adults and is strengthening partnerships with key agencies through entities such as the Youth Transitions Advisory Council, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Improving the transition of youth with serious special needs will take ongoing collaboration between multiple state agencies and community-based partners. Additionally, while there are some excellent services for some of the state's more complex youth, there are fewer developmentally appropriate services available for those young adults with a borderline IQ or certain mental health diagnoses. In some instances, youth have particular needs that are going unaddressed due to gaps in the array of services and housing.
- Increasing access to housing for young adults receiving EFCS is another opportunity TN DCS is exploring. Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (THDA) has provided information on grants and their web-based housing search. Current DCS providers are developing unique approaches to make housing available as well and applying for local housing authority funding.

- TN DCS continues to work with colleges and universities to develop support services for former foster youth. This included successfully moving five young adults up the waiting list to attend Tennessee College for Applied Technology programs.
- TN DCS continues to strive toward increasing employment opportunities for youth in care. Employment Opportunities for adolescents are necessary to assure economic self-sufficiency and generate self-esteem.
- Focus on earlier interventions with 14-16 year olds, to promote increased opportunities for life skills development.
- Integrate preparation for adulthood with permanency efforts through improved, quality Transition Planning (File reviews and coaching)
- Improve implementation of the credit check process for youth 14 and older in custody.
- DCS will continue to attempt to contact all young adults who could be eligible for TennCare; DCS has provided and will continue to provide an information sheet created by TennCare.
- Improve work around LGBT population and immigrant populations.
- Scale up pregnant and parenting best practices learned in the Knox County grant, statewide.
- EFCS expansion to include eligibility criteria, such as participating in program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment or employed for at least 80 hours per month.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- The Independent Living Youth handbook and “Guide for Teens in Care” was finalized and is now provided to all youth when they enter custody. The handbook was developed to ensure youth understand their rights and areas of ongoing skills development. The handbook was developed in collaboration with Youth-4-Youth boards, University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service and TN DCS.
- On March 26 and 27, 2015, the DCS Statewide Youth 4 Youth Ambassadors came together for festivities, fun and a lot of hard work. The Ambassadors are 20 youth and young adults from across the state that applied to be part of this group. Commissioner Henry greeted, shared stories and had dinner with them. Chef Donald Reed provided

dinner. Chef Reed, also spoke to the group the next day about his experiences and received the Youth-4-Youth (Y4Y) resiliency award. Chef Reed shared his message to the group, "Don't be a victim of your circumstances." "Follow your passions." On Friday, the group met at Oasis Center in Nashville to provide input on departmental issues. The Ambassadors reviewed and provided input and feedback on a few policies, discussed normalcy and met with the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands to discuss legal needs of young adults. Davidson County Juvenile Court Magistrate Carlton Lewis provided some leadership wisdom with the group in his messages. "Don't ever stop advocating for youth in foster care." "Adults need to do more listening." The Ambassadors worked on an outreach activity for youth in care and developed ideas for the next Youth-4-Youth Ambassador Meeting. The Ambassadors noted a few things of concern, "I get this label when I come in to foster care, I'm not just a foster child, but I'm a level 1, 2, 3." The hope for future foster children/youth is that professionals and foster parents show them they care and have high expectations of them.

- Middle Tennessee held a Vision Board Party in collaboration with Youth Connections on June 18, 2015. Approximately 8 to 10 youth attended. This event was to talk about setting goals and the steps needed to reach goals. Youth were able to share their goals through a presentation at the end of the party.
- Commissioner Henry met with young adults with previous foster care involvement twice during 2015 to discuss ongoing needs and issues with the system.
- DCS and Independent Living did over 20 PATH Panels with youth as co-trainers/speakers and three other large events where youth were asked to speak about experiences in foster care.
- DCS IL and Harmony Family Center hosted a Grand East Regional Leadership Academy for 25 DCS youth/young adults that was an amazing experience for all involved. TN DCS heard young people say repeatedly that they did not want to leave. They formed some new and lasting relationships, as well as had a chance to relax, have fun, and experience new things. Moreover, they learned new things about themselves and new skills, challenged themselves and took risks by sharing their life experiences with others, and they left Montvale stronger and more confident than when they arrived.
- As youth were rocking in the rockers on the porch waiting for rides, one of the girls said, "This was fun!" and another young man added, "This was the most fun I've ever had in foster care!" On Friday afternoon the young people shared the impact the two days had on them, as well as the staff share what the experience meant to them.

- The Grand Middle Region IL Leadership Academy was held on July 17, 2015, at New Frontiers. New Frontiers sponsored the entire event. The event had about 12 youth from the Grand Middle Region. The youth and staff went through a series of activities addressing communication, trust, decision-making, leadership skills and team building.
- Two YVLifeSet youth were selected to participate in the fourth annual Congressional Foster Youth Shadow Day.
- In April, 12, YVLifeSet youth traveled to Washington, DC, to participate in an event, "The History of Gospel," sponsored by The GRAMMY Museum. During this trip, YVLifeSet youth met with legislators and their staff to talk about the YVLifeSet program and advocate for these types of services to be available for all transitioning youth.
- One former YVLifeSet participant participated in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute Foster Youth Internship Program.
- In June, Governor Haslam joined former foster youth and national experts in a press conference at Youth Villages Operations Center in Memphis to announce and discuss positive results of the clinical trial of the YVLifeSet program in Tennessee.
- In 2015, the Department of Children's Services (Tennessee Valley Region), Hamilton County Citizen Review Panel, Hamilton County Community Advisory Board, Hamilton County Chamber of Commerce and Chambliss Center collaborated to give youth life skills experiences through a third annual simulation activity entitled Reality Check. Approximately 51 youth participated in the event. The two-hour, hands-on simulation gave young people a taste of the real world. It provided each youth with a career, family scenario and monthly expenses in order to increase youth awareness of the connection between education career and income.
- The Reality Check expanded to the TN DCS Upper Cumberland region. Approximately 20 youth attended a real life simulation activity designed to give students the opportunity to experience life as if they were 25 years old and providing sole or primary support of their household. DCS hopes Reality Check can be experienced by all youth in care.
- South Central "Step into Future" event was held in 2015. Nineteen youth, three foster families and 22 community partners attended. Various panels included youth, DCS workers and community partners. Several booths were set up for community and youth to obtain information about the different services provided. Community participants included TCCY, Vocational Rehabilitation, YVLifeSet, the Health Department, the US Army, Project Learn, Monroe Harding, Impact Center, Columbia State Community

College, Tennessee Children's Home Family Center, Omni Visions, Tennessee Career Institute, and Millar Rich.

- In October 2014, DCS staff assisted with the Walk to Beautiful event in Chattanooga. The event featured country-recording artist, advocate for foster children, and author Jimmy Wayne, who has published Walk to Beautiful: The power of Love and Homeless Kid Who Found the Way. The book tells the story of his time in foster care and the troubles youth face when they age out of the foster care system. The Department of Children Services collaborated with the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, the Chambliss Children's Center, Chattanooga Area Foster & Adoptive Care Association, Hamilton County Juvenile Courts, Partnership for Families, Children and Adults, Dr. Sue Anne Wells, and Youth Villages to raise awareness about foster youth aging out of the foster care system. The youth participated in a panel discussion to share their experiences in foster care.
- Independent Living (IL) Specialists attended 2,743 Child and Family Team Meetings for youth and young adults, providing technical support and advisement for the development of independent living or transition plans, discharge planning, placement stability and re-establishment of extended foster care services.
- Additionally, 266 youth and young adults received life skills instruction directly provided by IL Specialists between July 1, 2014, and March 31, 2015.
- DCS, Monroe Harding Youth Connections, and YVLifeSet aided Brianna L. Anderson from University of Southern Mississippi in her master's thesis, "Defining success: The perspective of emerging adults with foster care experience."
- LISTEN UP! is a project of Oasis Center in its role as replication partner for Wyman's Teen Outreach Program® (TOP) in Tennessee in cooperation with the DCS Office of Independent Living. Youth involved in TOP® at any of the congregate care providers implementing the program will participate. Planning and implementation of LISTEN UP! can be counted for TOP® hours. LISTEN UP! will engage youth in a poster contest intended to raise awareness about the needs and preferences of youth in care.

YOUTH VILLAGES LifeSet

Youth Villages' YVLifeSet program (formerly known as Transitional Living) is designed to assist young people between the ages of 17 and 22 who are transitioning from child welfare and juvenile justice services to adulthood in learning the skills needed to live successfully. A successful transition could include maintaining safe and stable housing, participating in an educational/vocational program, developing life skills necessary to become a productive citizen and remaining free from legal involvement. YVLifeSet specialists directly providing the services to the young people carry a small average caseload of eight to ten and have multiple contacts (via phone or face-to-face) weekly with each young person in order to engage on a high level with each. The program is based on a multiple systems approach meaning services are aimed not only at the individual but at all the areas (systems) that may affect the youth (e.g., community, peer group, family, and school/work).

Youth in the YVLifeSet program are assigned a specialist who is responsible for aiding youth in every step of the transition process. Specialists are responsible for teaching skills and lessons associated with the focal areas and will ensure that youth are capable of accessing community resources such as medical attention, housing, and financial support, if necessary. Specialists will be available to the youth 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also make a minimum of one face-to-face contact per week with the youth. The number of sessions can be increased based on the individual needs of each youth.

The focal areas of YVLifeSet include permanency, education, employment, housing (through natural supports), basic independent living skills and youth engagement. To support youth in their transition to adulthood, the program uses evidence-based interventions and best practices with regard to the following areas: trauma, pregnant/parenting youth, substance abuse issues, physical and mental health, domestic violence, financial literacy, and basic independent living skills.

Since the program was created in 1999, it has helped over 7,500 young people in Tennessee (and 9,200 nationwide) build independent and successful lives for them. Youth Villages has been able to effectively replicate the program in numerous locations. Today, YVLifeSet serves nearly 900 young people daily in Tennessee, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Georgia, and Oregon with a success rate of 87 percent.

Partnership with DCS

In 2007, the Tennessee Department partnered with the Day Foundation and Youth Villages to reach more youth across the state. That public/private partnership was expanded in 2013 when Youth Villages stepped forward and offered to match dollar-for-dollar state funding for services: Youth Village offered to contribute \$3 million in private dollars if the state would match those private dollars with \$3 million to provide comprehensive services for young people

aging out of foster care. This continued partnership provides the opportunity for every youth aging out of care in Tennessee to receive services.

TN YVLifeSet Data (FY 2015)

- YVLifeSet served about 625 youth daily
- 1,455 youth participated in the program
- 78 percent were in school or graduated
- 72 percent were employed or seeking employment
- 92 percent were living with family or independently
- 84 percent had been in no trouble with the law

Update on Clinical Trial

Youth Villages' YVLifeSet Program is participating in an independent, random assignment evaluation conducted by MDRC, a non-profit, non-partisan research and policy group that specializes in this type of evaluation. MDRC has an outstanding reputation in the field for methodological rigor and for translation of evaluative findings to policymakers. Dr. Mark Courtney, a researcher with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, leads the study as principal investigator. The study (taking place in Tennessee) includes more than 1,300 youth, making it the largest random assignment evaluation of this type of program for young people in this critical transition phase.

The evaluation examines the difference that Youth Villages' YVLifeSet program makes for youth aging out of care – its impacts on a range of outcomes, including education, employment, mental health, and financial security. It is intended to provide important information for policymakers and practitioners who are interested in improving the lives of these vulnerable young people.

[Impact findings](#) from the evaluation were released earlier this year and show that participation in the YVLifeSet program boosted earnings by 17 percent, increased housing stability and economic well-being (including a 22 percent decrease in the likelihood of experiencing homelessness) and improved some of the primary outcomes related to health and safety (including improvements in mental health and a decrease in intimate partner violence). The program was found to be equally effective across different subgroups of youth, including youth with and without histories of juvenile justice custody, as well as urban and rural youth.

WYMAN'S TEEN OUTREACH PROGRAM® YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

The Department of Children's Services continues to implement the federal Personal Responsibility Education Program to implement an evidence-based pregnancy prevention model, Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP®) in selected congregate care settings. Nine hundred ten adolescents participated in TOP® while receiving Level II or III residential services. A formative evaluation conducted by the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University in 2014 and 2015 indicated a number of promising impacts for youth and for the residential settings where TOP® is implemented:

- Youth showed improved communication skills, increased leadership behaviors, and a growing sense of themselves as people who matter and can make a difference.
- Staff trained in the TOP® model, most of whom were paraprofessional direct care staff was more likely to seek to build rapport with youth and to respond to disruptive behavior with fewer sanctions. Staff was also seen to hold higher expectations of youth and to provide more opportunities for authentic youth engagement and leadership.
- The average number of "serious incidents" reported per youth dropped from 2.53 overall to 1.58, pre to post TOP implementation.

TOP® takes a broad youth development approach to the prevention of pregnancy and other risky behaviors by engaging youth in:

- Curriculum-guided discussion groups that are active and engaging and in which youth do most of the talking;
- Youth-driven community service learning projects.

TOP® provides important opportunities for youth to participate in "normalized" activities and to experience important "protective factors," things that help individuals overcome adversity and risk. TOP® nurtures the key factors research identified as protective, social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy or sense of purpose, high expectations and opportunities for participation among them. TOP® service learning activities are particularly powerful vehicles for developing protective factors. Last year foster youth participating in TOP® provided more than 10,500 hours of service to Tennessee communities. Foster youth at Florence Crittenton in Knoxville work together year round to crochet blankets they donate to ill or traumatized infants. Youth at Holston Home in Greeneville collaborated with a community group to build houses for feral cats. Youth with Omni Vision in Mt. Juliet organized and held a lemonade stand at a local park to raise awareness about childhood cancer research. In TOP®, youth plan as well as carry out their service learning projects, practicing skills like planning, decision-making, budgeting, team work, etc.

Training, technical assistance and oversight of the TOP® project is provided by Oasis Center and the Tennessee Centers of Excellence for Children in State Custody. In FY 2015, TOP® was implemented at 17 congregate care sites across the state.

*Knowledge is power, Arm yourself with
power for every battle- Taahira*

RESOURCE CENTER REPORTS

Helen Ross McNabb Center's Project NOW

History

Helen Ross McNabb Center is a premier not-for-profit provider of behavioral health services in East Tennessee. Since 1948, the Center has provided quality and compassionate care to children, adults and families experiencing mental illness, addiction and social challenges. As the Center celebrates more than 65 years of providing services to communities in East Tennessee, its mission remains clear and simple: "Improving the lives of the people we serve." Following a merger with Child & Family Tennessee in August 2013, Helen Ross McNabb Center assumed management of Project NOW and has 32 years of experience working with runaway, homeless and at-risk teenagers, complemented by 19 years providing outreach services to youth in local schools, 11 years providing street outreach services, 16 years of offering transitional living services for older youth and young adults and four years of permanency services for youth in foster care.

Core Services

Project NOW (Navigating Opportunities that Work) is one of over 35 evidence-based programs operating under the umbrella of Helen Ross McNabb Center. Over the past year, Project NOW serves to provide Resource Center services to youth. Due to Jim Casey changes, youth are no longer required to open Individual Development Accounts; they can now open or use a bank account with ANY financial institution. The role of Project NOW is to proactively assist them in completing this task during their active program engagement. Participants are adolescents and young adults age 14 to 26 (up to the client's 26th birthday), who have a current or previous connection to the state's foster care system (at least one day after the age of 14). Project NOW allows youth access to the agency's existing transitional living services for youth and additionally included an IDA component for interested youth, meeting what is traditionally an unmet need of youth in transition in East Tennessee. The project serves any youth meeting criteria living within the 16 county DCS Knox, Smoky Mountain, or East Tennessee regions. Clients were offered 13 activities through Knoxville's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) approach, all of which fall within the domains of independence identified in the past in the reclaiming youth approach to positive youth development.

Local Partnerships

Community Partners include:
Knox County, Smoky Mountain and East Tennessee Department of Children’s Services
Helen Ross McNabb Center’s Runaway Shelter, Transitional Living Program (TLP) and Street Outreach
K-Town Youth Empowerment Network & K-Town Coordinating Council
Knox County Juvenile Court
Knox Area Compassion Coalition
Youth Villages Transitional Living Program (TLP)
Goodwill Industries
University of Tennessee Work Achievement Values Education (WAVE) GED program
Knox County Public Defender’s Office
University of Tennessee Center for Parenting
Boy Scouts of America
Knoxville Interfaith Network (KIN)
Youth Villages Governor’s Mentoring Program
Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union
YMCA Knoxville
YWCA Knoxville Housing
Knox County Health Department
Tenants Choice Property Management
Knox Auto Parts
Emerald Youth Foundation
Knoxville CAC Transit
Omni Visions
Camelot Care Centers
ChildHelp USA TN
Tennessee School of Beauty
Excent Ultimate Life Summit
Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development (SEED) of Knoxville
Smoky Mountain Financial
Hiwassee College
Middle Tennessee State University
Children’s Defense Fund; Haley Farms
Tennessee Housing Development Authority
Knoxville Homeless Coalition
Knox County CASA
Knoxville Leadership Foundation – KnoxWorks
Workforce Connections

Successes

- Number of Opportunity Passport participants ever enrolled: 169
- Number of participants currently enrolled: 104 (61.54 percent)
- Number of participants currently inactive: 26 (15.38 percent)
- Number of participants currently exited: 39 (23.08 percent)
- Project NOW has seen its highest referral numbers and sources in recent months. DCS and Youth Villages are the two main referral sources.
- Thus far, 90 matches have been completed by 59 different youth (36 unduplicated youth), totaling \$56,667.58 in matched funds. Average matched purchase was \$622.97. To date, 34.62 percent of youth have completed matches.
- Location secured for ongoing delivery of financial classes, life skill classes and asset trainings. Saturday programming is available for youth to increase program participation and attendance.
- Several youth have expressed interest in co-facilitating financial classes. A minimum of 10 youth have helped lead financial classes in March, June, and August 2015. Three youth have been identified to help co-facilitate the upcoming financial literacy class in December 2015.
- The number of Project NOW youth active on the Youth 4 Youth board has been increasing. At least a minimum of ten youth have attended two of three Youth 4 Youth meetings per quarter and have received a stipend.
- Debt reduction programming has prevented several Project NOW youth from facing eviction.
- Staff has been involved with DCS and the East Tennessee Council on Children and Youth.
- Coordinating Council helps address strengths and needs of youth in transition.
- The Project NOW Facebook page has aided in the delivery of program updates, resource attainment and community linkage. Facebook has been successful in the distribution of information related to independent living, shared successes, and inspirational posts.
- Participants continue to take advantage of speaking engagements and leadership opportunities.
- There have been 174 referrals made to Project NOW for this fiscal year. Many referrals have been from the following referral resources: DCS, resource parents, and community-based agencies.

Project NOW staff continues to encourage youth to take advantage of community service and leadership opportunities within the community. Thus far, participants have taken advantage of many different speaking opportunities on topics related to foster care, as well as some of personal interest to the individuals. Additionally, youth have been nominated for, and accepted, positions of distinction and awards from various entities:

- One youth is a member of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. She was able to act as a representative for the Coalition on Juvenile Justice in July 2015 that convened in Washington D.C.
- Community networking has allowed for personal assistance of participants to help locate and secure stable employment and housing;
- Staff initiated formal connections with Tennessee Career Center (employment) and KnoxWorks (employment);
- Youth were offered opportunities to participate in the Jim Casey Youth Leadership Institute in St. Louis, Missouri. A Project NOW youth has been selected to attend. She will have the opportunity to:
 - Deepen her understanding of the Initiative's Theory of Change (what we want to accomplish and how we are measuring progress),
 - Build her capacity to use Initiative and other data as a tool for improving outcomes for youth in care,
 - Expand her knowledge of current policies that young people and sites identified as most important in galvanizing public will and policy to better focus on needed reforms,
 - Increase her capacity to strategically utilize their real life experiences with child welfare systems as a tool for advocating for themselves and improved systems, and
 - Increase the capacity for new Jim Casey and AECF staff to continue to provide the Youth Leadership Institute
- The Statewide Youth Ambassador's board convened for the first time in March 2015. Four of the ambassadors from the East Region are enrolled in Project NOW.
- Project NOW's participants are becoming increasingly involved on the local Youth 4 Youth board, 17 Project Now participants attended a Youth 4 Youth meeting during this fiscal year.
- Clients continue to participate in local PATH panels, as well as those for surrounding counties. Clients have worked with Independent Living Specialist and Resource Parent Support to alleviate placement barriers for foster youth especially the older population. Potential resource parents were able to gain a youth perspective, as the client shared what being in foster care was like for her when she was a teenager;
- April 2015's survey event was held in conjunction with the Youth 4 Youth spring fling event.
- Youth 4 Youth participants continue to have an opportunity to critique the Tennessee Foster Youth Handbook, especially as it relates to their independent living needs.

- Project NOW has collaborated with Mentors for Youth (through DCS) to help with the facilitation of asset training and life skill attainment.
- Youth who age out of care are now eligible for TennCare up to the age of 26.
- The national Foster Club created an opportunity for intensive leadership and public speaking training. Youth had the opportunity to travel to youth events to inspire their younger peers still in the foster care system. In addition, All-Stars raise awareness about the over 400,000 young people in foster care and the 29,000 who age out every year nationally.
- Project NOW continues to operate under a set of strategies that will continue to improve outcomes for youth in transition. Project NOW participants have the opportunity to speak at orientation to share their experience with new members. They also have the opportunity to engage by helping co-facilitate the financial literacy training.
- Youth 4 Youth hosted a memorial event for a deceased board member. The event was called Walk for Faith.
- A new partnership was formed with the Educational Opportunity Center with University of Tennessee - Knoxville.
- In regards to communications, Project NOW coordinator has been able to use Facebook for program events and opportunities. Email notifications are used to make quarterly contact with all youth and as an attempt to update demographic information.
- The Project NOW coordinator continues to participate on the Youth Transitions Advisory Council in an attempt to improve public will and policy concerning youth in transition.
- Staff began the process of creating a resource board and a resource guide for youth in need of specific assistance. Areas of focus include legal matters, education, mental health/ physical health, housing, community engagement, independent living, belonging, transportation, alcohol/drug treatment, and financial capability, and employment opportunities.

Challenges and Barriers

- Transportation needs can be a barrier to serving young people in transition. We have found that many youth do not have access to personal transportation and, even though Financial Literacy courses are held near a major bus stop, not all youth have access to public transportation.
- Fulfilling contractual obligations of additional services can sometimes be challenging, given staff limitations and respect for youth's personal time and other obligations/commitments.

- The high volumes of interest have left little time for Project NOW staff to verify partners. A collaborative list of past and potential partners has been developed in an attempt to create new MOU's (memorandum of understandings) for door-openers.
 - An area for improvement within Project NOW is to build community support and door openers.
 - Time constraints have limited staff opportunity to follow up with past resources and partnerships.
- There has been minimal involvement with the TVA banking partner. Multiple attempts have been made to invite her support, but responses have been at a minimal. Project NOW staff may need to soon identify a new banking partner and/or find another TVA representative willing to support the initiative.
 - This has placed a burden on youth acquiring financial capability as it relates to the establishment of a bank account in a timely manner.
- Youth continue having difficulty in fulfilling full enrollment criteria. Youth begin the process and for various reasons, do not finish the full enrollment process in Jim Casey Opportunity Passport.
- Some difficulty in reaching all outcome measurements and maintaining stable connections with youth participants due to the program having only a single staff person and increasing caseloads.
- Challenges in accountability and commitment due to use of external financial institutions.
- There is a limited availability for Project NOW training and events through the John Tarleton Conference room.
- A high volume of referrals and enrollments creates a hindrance for thorough program development and stability.
- Group homes are interested in Project NOW being offered onsite, but this opportunity has not been possible due to time constraints and a high caseload.
- Project NOW failed to meet the 80 percent OPPS survey completion rate in April 2015. Staff continues to remain in contact with participants on an ongoing basis to minimize an inactive participant status.

Stable housing and employment continues to be a barrier for transient youth.

Next Steps

During the next year, Helen Ross McNabb Center's Project NOW will continue to:

- Enroll youth in Financial Literacy courses,
 - Specifically addressing issues relating to those who fail to complete the entire enrollment process.
- Assist interested youth in opening Individual Deposit Accounts (IDA) with Project NOW's banking partner;
- Build community partnerships around education, employment, housing, health, personal development, and other support services;
- Continue efforts to actively seek new and innovative ways to facilitate permanent connections for youth, in alignment with current initiative focus;
- Continue engagement with KYTC to increase local networking collaborations and efforts towards youth services;
- Continue to make accommodations as needed to assist with youth enrollment, active participation, and successful completion of financial education programming.

Knoxville Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Laura Denton

	Previous Year July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015	Year to Date July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016
Opportunity Passport™		
Number of new youth enrolled	58	10
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	4 sessions	1 session
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	28 including one on one sessions	19 one on one sessions
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	100%	100%
OPPS Surveys		
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey	74% (April & October)	NA% (April & October)
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	12 Youth / 4 Community	3youth / 1 community
Number of new door openers created	3	0
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	6	3
Total number of participants in life skills classes	20	24
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	12	3

Partnership- I.A.M Ready Chattanooga Independent Living Resource Center

History

The Partnership for Families, Children and Adults (Partnership) has provided services to at-risk youth through various programs since its establishment in 1877. Agency-wide services include foster and adoptive services for dependent, neglected, homeless and runaway youth; family and individual counseling; independent living services; sexual assault and domestic violence services, serving over 75,000 Families in 2013.

Partnership is one of the few accredited human services organizations in Chattanooga. We are accredited with the Council on Accreditation. This assures funders and partners that we have met “best practice” standards in all areas of our organization. We are also a licensed child placement agency, throughout the agency we approach all clients with a trauma informed, strength based, and culturally sensitive philosophy.

Mission Statement

The Partnership Mission statement is as follows: “Partnership is a community impact organization whose mission is to strengthen families and individuals of all ages. Our services provide benefits through an effective array of critical services and collaborative partnerships that continually evolve to meet community needs.”

Vision Statement

Partnership Vision statement is as follows: “Partnership is the recognized leader in providing excellent human services that meet the ever changing needs of our communities’ families and individuals of all ages.”

Partnership Programs Impact – The Entire Circle of Life

The Partnership is Chattanooga’s oldest and largest human services nonprofit organization. Partnership has over 20 programs that provide individuals and families with the tools and resources to build stability and create independence. From children to elderly, Partnership programs affect the entire circle of life in the Greater Chattanooga area. These programs are not geared to help an individual for a day, a month or even a year. Instead, the Partnership aims to develop a lifetime of success for the most vulnerable in our community.

Partnership 5 Centers of Service:

Youth Services-Elder Services-Family Strengthening Services-Credit Counseling Services – Crisis Services

Reaching a diverse range of individuals and families through Five Centers of Service, Partnership programs focus on specific needs of the Greater Chattanooga community experienced social workers, counselors & other highly trained professionals. Together, these separate but complimentary Centers of Services provide support to families & individuals who may have many related needs.

Youth Service core services are Family Foster Care, Emergency Foster Care, Respite Foster Care, Therapeutic Foster Care and Independent Living Services (IAM Ready Center).

The IAM Ready Center grand opening was held on June 25, 2014. The center is co-located with the City of Chattanooga's Youth and Family Development Department, creating a one-stop shop for program participants. The center has just celebrated its one year anniversary. YFD services include Education, Leadership, Career Development, Social Services and Recreation services providing every child and family with the opportunity for success, safer streets, and promote economic development.

IAM READY Center serves young people between the ages of 14-26 who have spent at least 1 day in foster care after the age of 14, living in or around the Hamilton County Area. Services available include a financial education curriculum that teaches basic knowledge such as savings, asset building, credit, credit reports, money management, budgeting, etc.

In addition to financial skill-building and support, IAM READY Center participants have access to streamlined and specialized services within the Hamilton County community, specifically related to the key outcome areas defined by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative that are evidence-based to be essential for a successful transition into adulthood. Participants are connected with resources and tools within their community to help them establish their own social capital and support networks.

Local Partnerships

Partnership organization has partnered with the City of Chattanooga's Youth & Family Development Department to implement the Jim Casey Initiative in the Chattanooga area. Both organizations have committed to providing resources and opportunities for young people. The community partners include key members from many of the areas that Partnership is hoping to affect outcomes, including education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital and financial capability.

Partners are:

- Education: Chattanooga State, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Bryan College, Southern Adventist, ITT-Technical Institute;
- Employment: Southeast Local Workforce Investment Board, Tennessee Career Center of Southeast Tennessee, Youth and Family Development- Career Development;
- Housing: Pathways for Young Adult Program- Transitional Living, Youth Villages, Partnership Foster Care, Chattanooga Homeless Coalition, Chattanooga Housing Authority, Partnership Homeless Program;
- Physical and Mental Health: Health Connect of America, Mental Health Co-Op, Fort-Wood, Blue Cross Blue Shield;
- Social Capital: Department of Children Services, Community Foundations of Greater Chattanooga, City of Chattanooga, T-Mobile;
- Financial Capability: Partnership Credit Counseling Services, Tennessee Valley Authority Credit Union, First Tennessee Bank.

Successes

Since opening day of June 25, 2014 the IAM Ready Center has enrolled 37 youth in the program. The center hosted and coordinated a total of 40 Life skills classes, door-opener events and leadership activities involving youth in the decision-making process.

The collaboration with city of Chattanooga Youth Family Development has been extremely helpful, young adults are benefiting from the Career Development Program, Lexia Reading program, Title II Commodities and various educational programs. T-Mobile donated school/program supplies to the program this year, along with hosting a door opener event and leadership engagement.

The IAM Ready Center enrollees participated in the Jimmy Wayne Concert in Chattanooga, there were over 400 foster parents and youth that attended. IAM Ready participants were part of the roundtable discussion about this population.

Challenges and Barriers

Many of the young people that come to the IAM Ready Center for services lack support systems that can assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning into adulthood. They are often unemployed, have a lack of transportation, are dealing with current and past abuse (emotional, physical and sexual), have had insufficient future planning and are sometimes homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. These presenting issues make it difficult for the

young people to remain focused on following through with completing the goals they have set for themselves.

Additionally, youth aging out of foster care often do not have access to medical care or knowledge of medical coverage and benefits available. Additional funding is needed for caseworkers and matching funds for program participants.

Collaboration with DCS is continuing to improve, strategic planning is needed on an ongoing basis.

Transportation remains a barrier for participation.

Next Steps

Partnership's IAM Ready Center is excited about the program and very confident in achieving program outcomes within a timely manner. Year one was mainly focused on program set up and implementation and participation of attendees, Year two the program will focus on reaching or exceeding program-established outcomes; continued use of focus groups to re-assure that the youth enrolled are represented through Youth 4 Youth Participation.

The organization continues to assess its' programs and make changes and improvements where needed. Partnership IAM Ready Center will continue with the current programming and strive to reach additional young people, strengthening the manner in which we use the youth voice to improve our services.

Partnership will focus on receiving matching funds for asset purchases through fundraising efforts.

Partnership is currently providing Transitional Housing through a contract with Pathways Young Adult Program; we have served six youth through Extension of Foster Care Services.

Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update- Completed by Jack Parks

IAM READY REPORT CHATTANOOGA	July, August, Sept	Oct, Nov, Dec	Jan, Feb, March	April, May, June
Opportunity Passport™				
Number of new youth enrolled	12	5	12	8
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	2	4	7	6
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	2	4	2	4
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome		100%		100%
Survey				
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey		60%		30%
Community Partnership Boards				
Number of board meetings	2	1	1	1
Number of new door openers created	3	2	3	4
Life Skills Classes				
Number of life skills classes held	2	5	5	6
Total number of participants in life skills classes	10	28	26	21
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment				
Youth Leadership Activities				
Number of youth leadership activities offered	2	2	3	4
Employed or in school				

South Memphis Alliance, Inc.

History

South Memphis Alliance (SMA) opened its doors in 2000 to help organize neighborhood associations in the urban communities of South Memphis. Over time, SMA expanded services to serve youth in foster care and families in crisis. Despite growth, SMA holds fast to its core belief that civic engagement is the bedrock of strong communities, and that **strong communities promote stable families.**

SMA work focuses largely on five core initiatives:

- **Dream Seekers Initiative** works with young people transitioning from foster care.
- **Hope Chest** includes comprehensive sex education, as well as supports services for pregnant and parenting teens who are or were in foster care.
- **Square One** program is designed as an alternative to detention for juvenile offenders.
- **Community Action Panel** is composed of community leaders from over a dozen South Memphis civic groups; and, neighborhood associations.
- **Social Suds Resource Center**, located inside a neighborhood Laundromat, provides a plethora of social services to patrons of the Laundromat.

SMA is one of the most unique community based agencies in the City of Memphis. Our close connection with urban residents creates a level of trust and interaction rarely seen between an agency and members of the community.

Emergency Services

- **Food vouchers,**
- **Bus passes,**
- **Clothing/Uniform vouchers,**
- **Assistance with housing option location,**
- **Household/hygiene items,**
- **Furniture (upon availability).**

Educational Services

- **Intensive life skills for foster youth,**
- **HIV/AIDS education and testing,**
- **Anger management and conflict resolution,**
- **Financial education,**
- **Goal setting,**
- **Teen pregnancy and parenting supports,**
- **Moral Reconciliation Therapy™.**

Local Partnerships

Tennessee Department of Children Services	Meritan Inc.	Bent Tree Apartments	Metropolitan Inter Faith Association (MIFA)
Southern College of Optometry	Shelby County Office of Childhood and Youth	First Tennessee Bank	MemTV
Memphis Cares	Grizzlies Foundation	State of Tennessee (Shelby County) Community Advisory Board	Shelby County Juvenile Court
United Way of the Mid-South	Memphis Public Library	ResCare	The Grizzlies Foundation
Planned Parenthood of the Greater MidSouth	The Assisi Foundation	Shelby County Family Planning	Southwest Prep Academy
Omni Visions	Memphis Artists for Change	Lemoyne Owen College	St. Jude Research Hospital
Porter Leath	Shelby County Health Department	Maximus	Hope Credit Union

Successes

- SMA has always made an effort to include young people involved in the juvenile justice system in its programs. As a member of the Shelby County JDAI (Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative) committee, SMA has been on the forefront of its implementation in Shelby County. Beginning November 1, 2015, SMA will initiate its “**Square One**” initiative. Square One, will serve five young men who are involved in the Juvenile Justice system for approximately 21 days as an alternative to secure detention. Upon completion of the Square One program, these young men will be automatically connected to the Opportunity Passport™ program. This will be a tool to keep them engaged, as well as assist us with reducing recidivism among this population.
- SMA now offers financial education at two satellite sites, in an attempt to overcome the transportation/location obstacles faced by many of the young people served. SMA partnered with Meritan and has already had five young people from Meritan complete the program. SMA has also established an agreement with Omni Visions, and will hold a financial education training session there in the fall of this year.
- Daniel was the prototype for our **Square One** initiative. He came to the agency as a juvenile justice referral. He had been in Shelby County Juvenile Detention for a little over a month. Daniel was at risk for dropping out of school and had severe anger management problems. Daniel graduated high school last May and is enrolled at Southwest Community College.
- Our Youth Services Coordinator, Melissa Howard, completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Memphis and is now pursuing her master’s degree at DePaul University, allowing us to train another Dream Seeker for this position.
- Six teens enrolled in and successfully graduated from the **Hope Chest** program, which provides incentives for implementing healthy parenting skills, such as doctor’s visits, well-child check ups, breastfeeding, parenting classes and good academic standing for the parents.

Challenges and Barriers

- Housing is a consistent barrier to engagement. The young people are moving multiple times in a year due to their inability to secure housing. Their addresses and their phone numbers change frequently, and they often are unable to connect with needed resources due to no consistent place to stay or be located.

- Transportation needs are a barrier for the population that SMA serves. The agency provides bus passes to participants, but the public transit system in the area is often inadequate.
- Due to transportation issues, youth who enroll in the program at satellite sites often are more difficult to engage for group activities.

Next Steps

- SMA continues to diligently seek housing options and innovations in providing housing for young people transitioning out of care.
- Sponsorship for IDA matches, stipends/incentives and computer equipment/ building space are among top priorities.
- SMA will launch a capital campaign to help secure funding for a project to build a mixed-income community on our campus, which will include housing for youth transitioning from foster care.

Success Story

Taahira is a member of our inaugural Dream Seekers class. She came into care as a teenager due to neglect. Her mother was a drug abuser and was unable to care for her and her siblings. Taahira spoke at SMA's annual Unity Dinner. She shared her story with citizens, public servants, politicians, human service workers, community leaders and other young people in foster care. She told about two of her placements. One was good, and the other was a not so good placement. She shared with the audience that during her time in care, she's experienced sexual assault and abuse. She also shared many positives such as her experience with the Dream Seekers program and the Youth-4-Youth board of Shelby County.

While delivering her speech, Taahira made a very profound statement. She concluded by telling us all, "My past is not an indicator of my future!" Two weeks later Taahira came into the office to give us her address and show us her new car! These may not seem like huge reasons to celebrate on the surface, but her new address is in Linden, Tennessee. She will need her new car to drive to her new job with Youth Villages, where she will work with other young people who are in the child welfare system. These are all very good reasons to celebrate! We celebrate Taahira's future with her. It looks very bright!

Memphis Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Tameka D. Greer

	Previous Year	Year to Date
Opportunity Passport™		
Number of new youth enrolled	55	22
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	32	16
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	7	4
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	83%	86%
OPPS Surveys		
% of youth completing an OPPS survey (April & October only)	83.64%	84.78% (April)
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	4	5
Number of new door openers created	2	1
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	12	4
Total number of participants in life skills classes	62	21
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	16	5

"Kids need more opportunities to explore their options not only as a youth but as a functioning human being. Too many times have I seen kids treated like things meant to be moved around until it looks right, they're not furniture.

I'm lucky the Knox staff has been very helpful in the process but it's only because I was involved and spoke. So being a part of a kids life isn't just a job it's a privilege, because we are the most fallible, it just takes the right push.

*I'm in college because of that right push."
JaDonald*

Monroe Harding Youth Connections

History

Monroe Harding (MH) was established in 1893 to provide a home for orphaned children. Throughout the years, it has served over 15,000 youth, and today continues to provide services for youth and their families throughout middle Tennessee. Monroe Harding's mission is to guide and support the most vulnerable children and youth across a bridge to personal independence and success within a safe and nurturing environment. Monroe Harding provides both residential and nonresidential programs. The residential program provides a home for at-risk youth who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect and behavioral problems. The non-residential programs are Therapeutic Foster Care, which provides families ready to open homes to vulnerable children from birth to age 18; Independent Living, which provides a safe place for youth to live as they transition out of care into the community; and Youth Connections, which is a one-stop shop resource center for young people ages 16 to 26 who are currently in, or aging out of, the foster care system.

Core Services

Youth Connections has been in existence for almost 10 years and has focused on quality performance since inception. The center provides an assortment of services focused on empowering youth through their transition out of care. Youth Connections houses six major programs: Opportunity Passport™ financial management, life skills, Stepping Stones employment training, GED education, S.H.E. (Sexual Health Education) for young women, and an in-house thrift closet specifically for foster youth. Through our programs and staff relations, we encourage personal stability and a healthy transition into adulthood for all young adults involved in Youth Connections.

Local Partnerships

Youth Connections continues to partner with the Department of Children's Services and US Bank.

Through our Stepping Stones program, MH partners with several local businesses and organizations such as Crossroads Pet Shop and Adopt, Habitat ReStore, Rocket Fizz Candy Shop, the Nashville Banner, Essex Bargain Hunt Stores and The Shop Barber and Hair Salon. These businesses have agreed to provide internships/vocational training or employment opportunities to prepare young people for the workforce.

Youth Connections informally collaborates with Oasis Center, Y-Build, Job Corp, United Neighborhood Health Care, Goodwill Career Solutions, Youth Villages and the Community Advisory Board to provide services to youth who do not meet the criteria to be in DCS custody.

This group of young people can receive various services through the aforementioned agencies, such as referrals to community resources, financial assistance, counseling, and mentoring.

Successes

Since Youth Connections has been in existence, over 120 young people have obtained their GED through their participation in the GED classes, and 80 percent of Stepping Stones participants have obtained employment with the assistance of the job coach. Also, in addition to young people learning sound financial management and the importance of saving, numerous youth have matched their savings through Opportunity Passport™ to purchase assets such as transportation, laptops for school and investments in a Roth IRA.

S.H.E. (Sexual Health Education), which has been in existence for almost two years, has so far educated over 60 young women on how to change their behavior to avoid contracting HIV and STDs and to significantly decrease their chances of being involved in unintended pregnancies. We have educated young women not only at the resource center but have also facilitated this program at G4S, Camelot and Omni Visions residential facilities.

Youth Connections is located on the third floor of McKendree United Methodist Church This downtown Nashville location places the center in the heart of the city and makes it more accessible to program participants. The center is also in close proximity to many of its community partners, including the Department of Children's Services, and closer to many resources such as the Nashville Public Library. The church has also provided volunteers, donations to the thrift closet and support for many of our events.

Youth Connections held two graduation ceremonies celebrating over 20 GED and high school graduates. Many of the community partners, as well as the graduates' families attended the ceremonies. Monroe Harding awarded 11 scholarships that totaled just over \$10,000. The participants were able to use their scholarship money for tuition, rent, transportation, or needed supplies for their post-secondary training. Students enrolled at several different higher education institutions including Nashville State Technical School, Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Tennessee State University and University of Arkansas Pine Bluff.

Challenges and Barriers

Many of the young people who come to Youth Connections for services lack support systems that can assist them with navigating the challenging period of transitioning into adulthood. They are often unemployed, lack transportation, are dealing with current and past abuse (emotional, physical and sexual), have had insufficient future planning and are sometimes homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. Many of these presenting issues make it difficult for the young people to remain focused on following through with completing the goals that they have set for themselves.

Next Steps

Monroe Harding is committed to serving more youth and achieving better outcomes. Just over two years ago, Monroe Harding began making the transition to a trauma-informed agency. The agency is committed to recognizing and responding to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the system, including children, caregivers and service providers. Monroe Harding is ensuring that all staff at every level of the organization is trained and the agency is able to sustain trauma awareness, knowledge and skills into the organizational culture, practices, and policies. The agency's goal is to act in collaboration with all those who are involved with the youth, using the best available science to facilitate and support the recovery and resiliency of the youth.

The organization continues to assess its programs and make changes and improvements where needed. Youth Connections will continue with the current programming and strive to reach additional young people, strengthening the manner in which we use the youth voice to improve our services.

Nashville Resource Center Report

YTAC Annual Report/Update

Report Completed by: Pamela Madison

	Previous Year	Year to Date
Opportunity Passport™		
Number of new youth enrolled	40	43
# of Financial Literacy Classes offered	12	11
# of Asset Specific Classes offered	22	22
% of youth with favorable post-test outcome	97%	95%
OPPS Surveys		
(April & October only), % of youth completing an OPPS survey	62%	68%
Community Partnership Boards		
Number of board meetings	1	1
Number of new door openers created	6	8
Life Skills Classes		
Number of life skills classes held	21	22
Total number of participants in life skills classes	224	200
% of youth showing increased proficiency pre to post assessment	100%	100%
Youth Leadership & Engagement		
Number of youth leadership activities offered	8	10

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY FOR YOUTH GRANT

In 2013, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) approached the chair of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council about the Council supporting an application for a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to deliver treatment and recovery support services to adolescents and transitional aged youth. The Youth Transitions Advisory Council would collaborate with grantees and provide consultation and state-level support. The grant was awarded in September 2013 in the amount of \$3.8 million over four years through September 29, 2017. The Department contracts with Centerstone Research Institute for data and evaluation and with Centerstone of Tennessee and Pathways, Inc. as the service providers to implement the Treatment and Recovery for Youth (TRY) grant in Maury and Madison counties. The TRY Team has become an integral part of the Youth Transitions Advisory Council. Team members from TDMHSAS, Centerstone and Pathways are always in attendance and are active participants in meetings, providing updates on progress toward grant goals at each Council meeting.

Approximately 165 youth/transitional aged youth have been served through the first two years of the grant. The target number to be served over the life of the grant is 400.

The evidence based model used with the grant is the Adolescent – Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA). The goal of the model is for the youth to find the healthy and positive behaviors more rewarding and "reinforcing" than their unhealthy substance abusing lifestyle. A-CRA helps youth and their parents identify pro-social activities and services in their community to become involved in that provide important alternatives to time spent using substances. In addition, A-CRA teaches skills to improve communication, problem solving and the ability to create positive relationships. A-CRA shows several positive outcomes, including reduction in substance use, legal involvement and co-occurring mental health problems. TDMHSAS has begun the process of developing a multi-year workforce development training plan that will enhance services delivered by adolescent and transitional youth-serving providers across the state. The A-CRA model training was provided to seven agencies in June 2015 serving either youth or transitional age youth. The expectation is that the training will be provided again in late spring of 2016 to an additional eight agencies.

TRY grant partners have delivered TRY Project and A-CRA informational sessions and trainings to numerous community agencies and programs, including juvenile courts and public schools. To date more than 1,300 professionals and youth advocates have been educated on the TRY Project and A-CRA.

Another important part of the grant is the development of local advisory councils that work to disseminate information and reach out to community partners serving youth. There have been some exciting events targeted to youth that have been organized through these councils.

TENNESSEE HEALTHY TRANSITIONS INITIATIVE

The Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative is a five-year \$5 million discretionary grant awarded to the TDMHSAS by the SAMHSA in September 2014. The purpose of the Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative is to assist Tennessee youth and young adults with or at risk of developing a serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder in improving their health and wellness, leading self-directed lives, and reaching their full potential. This goal will be accomplished through providing coordinated public awareness, outreach and engagement, and access to treatment and resiliency and recovery support services to youth and young adults ages 16-25 with or at risk of serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder in two targeted communities.

The Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative has three populations of focus: youth and young adults ages 16-25 who are at risk of having or developing a serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder; youth and young adults ages 16-25 who have been identified as experiencing a serious mental health condition and/or co-occurring disorder; and the general public. Additionally, Healthy Transitions will provide targeted and innovative awareness, outreach, and specialized treatment and recovery support services to the following prioritized populations of youth and young adults ages 16-25: those in contact with the criminal justice system; those aging out of foster care through child welfare; those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and those who identify as being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, or Intersex (LGBTQI).

Local Laboratory 1 is located in a rural seven-county area in Northwest Tennessee (Benton, Carroll, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion and Weakley counties) and is being implemented by Carey Counseling Center, Inc. *Local Laboratory 2* is located in Hamilton County in Southeast Tennessee and is being implemented by Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Services. Tennessee Voices for Children houses the Statewide Youth Coordinator and will also assist with statewide public awareness efforts. Centerstone Research Institute houses the Lead Evaluator, who coordinates evaluation activities.

In addition, TDMHSAS will partner with key stakeholders and youth and young adults from both state and local levels to convene a State Transition Team (STT). The STT will collaboratively prioritize system improvements to the child and adult mental health systems and other relevant child and adult system partners, including funding mechanisms, administrative structures, regulatory requirements, policy, and array of services and supports available to youth

and young adults with or at risk of serious mental health conditions and/or co-occurring disorders. Using data from the Local Laboratories to inform priority areas, the STT will work in partnership with member organizations and individuals to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and/or interagency agreements as needed to enhance the coordination of services for youth in transition across departments and agencies and address funding and policy changes needed to realize system improvements. The STT will function as a public-private partnership with reporting responsibilities to three statutorily mandated councils: the Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC), the Council on Children’s Mental Health (CCMH), and the TDMHSAS Planning and Policy Council.

Team members from TDMHSAS, Tennessee Voices for Children, Centerstone Research Institute, Carey Counseling Center, Inc., and Volunteer Behavioral Health Care Services regularly attend and are active participants at Youth Transitions Advisory Council (YTAC) meetings, now providing updates on progress toward grant goals at each Council meeting.

TENNESSEE FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS INITIATIVE (FEPI)

In the FY 2014 appropriation, Congress allocated additional funds to SAMHSA to support “evidence-based programs that address the needs of individuals with early serious mental illness, including psychotic disorders.” States were required to set-aside 5 percent of their Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) allocation to support this evidence-based program. The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) began planning for the implementation of the five percent set aside to address early intervention programming as soon as the 2014 budget legislation passed. The proposal approved by SAMHSA included provisions for a First Episode Psychosis (FEP) treatment program focusing on a rural area of Tennessee using the Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode (RAISE) model. The proposal provided a beginning budget, staffing and implementation model designed to be flexible in the face of the challenges of implementing an urban program in a rural area. With innovations focusing on the use of technology and a one-provider arrangement, the proposal was approved and implementation began within 30 days following approval. The first year amount committed to the 5 percent set aside was \$419,590 (this total is minus a five percent administrative allowance).

Carey Counseling Center, Inc. (Carey) is the primary provider in the seven-county area chosen for the implementation of the OnTrack Tennessee program (OnTrackTN). In the months following the approval of the proposal, TDMHSAS contracted with Carey to implement the program in a seven-county area in the northwest corner of Tennessee. The counties in the service area are Lake, Obion, Weakley, Benton, Carroll, Gibson and Henry. The program serves adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 to 30, who are experiencing psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, unusual thoughts or beliefs, or disorganized thinking, with

symptoms present for more than a week but less than 18 months. The contract included all of the proposed aspects of the program including team development, hiring, training, technology and outreach into the community. To date, Carey has admitted 12 clients to the program in advance of the first anniversary of the program's start, which exceeds the program's original goal. TDMHSAS and its partners are interested in leveraging the obvious success of the FEPI in Tennessee. Planning is ongoing for expansion of the FEPI into other areas of the state, especially those areas in which the Tennessee Healthy Transitions Initiative is also implemented. In addition, there are other partner-based programs in existence that are proving invaluable in terms of access to specialized care for young people experiencing their first episode of psychosis and the compassionate treatment of families who care for the young person. Vanderbilt University's psychiatric treatment facility is fully involved in implementing a more recovery-focused model of treatment.

On September 3 and 4, 2015, TDMHSAS, in partnership with Vanderbilt University, Carey Counseling Center, Inc. and the Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) hosted an educational conference entitled "First Episode Psychosis: Developing New Directions in Tennessee." The conference was attended by approximately 200 statewide and national professionals and interested individuals.

The TDMHSAS FEPI Program Manager and the OnTrackTN Team Leader regularly attend YTAC meetings.

APPENDIX A
MEETING AGENDAS AND SUMMARIES



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Andrew Jackson Building, Ninth Floor
502 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956
1-800-264-0904

Youth Transitions Advisory Council
November 20, 2014
12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time
Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee
937 Herman Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37208

Agenda

Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of September Meeting Summary

- *Steve Petty, Youth Policy Advocate, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth*

Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update –

- *Michael Leach, Director, Office of Independent and Transitional Living, Department of Children's Services.*

Update from Resource Centers

- *Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding*
- *Keisha Shervington, Helen Ross McNabb*
- *Tameka Daniel, South Memphis Alliance*
- *Jack Parks, Chattanooga/Hamilton/Southeast*

Update from Youth Villages Transition Living Program

- *Joseph Goldsmith, Transitional Living Coordinator, Youth Villages*

Update from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant

- *April Tanguay, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services*
- *Ashley Harrington, Centerstone*
- *Clayton Ramsey and Erica Spencer, Pathways*

Feedback on Annual Report delivered October 30, 2014

Future Meeting Topics

Next Meeting

- *May 7, 2015, Thursday*
- *June 19, 2015, Thursday meeting jointly with the Council on Children's Mental Health*
- *August 13, 2015*

Other Business



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Andrea Jackson Building, 9th Floor
502 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956
1-800-264-0904

Youth Transitions Advisory Council

November 20, 2014

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants:

Dave Aguzzi

Pamela Cash

Rebecca Carmack

Tyrone Copeland

Tameka Daniel

Karin Freyer

Kaila Gilbert

Joe Goldsmith

Ashley Harrington

Ginger Harris

Briana Johnson

Mike Leach

Melanie Malabanan

James Martin

Linda O'Neal

Jack Parks

Steve Petty

Clayton Ramsey

Erica Spencer

Sherry Smith

Jill Watral

Welcome and Introductions (Steve Petty)

- Petty welcomed everyone. Explained he would chair meeting in absence of Executive Director O'Neal who had a conflict until later in the afternoon.
- Petty introduced intern. Thanked her for assisting with meeting notes.
- Meeting agenda changed since September due to inability to secure presenter on transportation issues.

Acceptance of September Meeting Summary (Petty)

- Petty asked members to review the September Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.
- **IT WAS MOVED (HARRINGTON) AND SECONDED (DANIEL) TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 2014 MEETING SUMMARY. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Department of Children's Services and Office of Independent and Transitional Living Update – Michael Leach, Director, Office of Independent and Transitional Living, Department of Children's Services.

- Life Skills: DCS recently did life skills survey for 14-18 year olds and had a huge response rate of 949 surveys. The survey asks for perspectives, knowledge and confidence regarding life activities. There was great variety in responses.
- On December 5th, DCS will hold two webinars for those who want to learn about life skills. There will be morning and afternoon sessions. DCS will follow up with providers and ask for improvements.
- Permanency Plan Redesign: This is a long-term project where experts can give insight and feedback on plan.
- New Federal Legislation: The Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act includes credit checks for youth in foster care ages 14 year old and up.
- Teachable Moments: This is a curriculum for foster parents for teaching life skills. Survey results will be included in curriculum and training. It creates policies around reasonable and prudent parenting (more responsibility and decision-making for foster parents), less oversight by DCS, more opportunities for foster parents to create normalcy for youth living in their homes.
- DCS is currently updating the handbook for foster parents.
- Walk to Beautiful, in October with Jimmy Wayne. Over 250 youth attended, with over 500 present. Sessions covered employment, sex education and health.
- DCS is meeting with HUD and housing authorities in Chattanooga tomorrow morning via phone call. There will be a similar meeting in Knoxville for more information on transitioning youth.
- Youth Villages surveyed 875 17-year-old youth to collect data that was sent to the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. DCS will be conducting a similar survey on 21 year olds.
- Five youth moved up on the waiting lists at Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.
- DCS is doing more outreach among 21-25-year-old youth to make sure they are aware of TennCare eligibility for former foster youth under the Affordable Care Act.
- A new pilot program, United Project, established a collaboration involving DCS, Pencil Foundation and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) for young people in foster care who attend MNPS schools. The collaboration has been meeting with business partners and hopes to reach 70 young people with the program, then spread the word. Two young people are now engaged in pilot.
- Leach commented DCS now has more in extension of foster care now than ever before, and has served many young people.
- Harris mentioned Youth-4-Youth (partnered with Youth Connections) has had good attendance and been functioning since September. It is currently preparing youth for legislative day on the Hill. Zach Blair, DCS Legislative Liaison, came to speak with youth. The next meeting is scheduled for December 10th. They are in the planning process for statewide board. Petty asked if travel, etc., is covered for youth, and Harris reported costs are covered for legislative day on the hill.

- Leach mentioned that Chattanooga will start a Youth-4-Youth Board in late November. Hopefully, there will be four boards with youth involvement this year.
- Leach asked if anyone in attendance knew youth who could be on a statewide board. Youth can participate in policy and legislative work while having fun. DCS is trying to get youth voices in the system to explain their struggles and needs.
- Leach reported recommendations for a Dropbox have presented challenges. There was a conversation with Youth Villages in Florida about a file sharing system that was youth-built, but it costs “a fortune.” Petty said it is great that they are trying to build access to necessary documents for youth.
- Leach asked for further questions. Petty thanked Harris and Leach for their work and the update.

Update from Resource Centers

Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding

- Cash says they continue to enroll youth in program and are trying to increase participation for Pregnancy Prevention program and Sexual Health Education. Cash asked members to refer any young women who could benefit. The program teaches youth how to make better decisions and keep themselves healthy and safe. Cash offered to provide contact information.
- The program received visit from Kelly Clarkson who is doing benefit concert December 20th at Bridgestone Arena. Monroe Harding and three other non-profit programs will benefit. A video was filmed with two youth at Monroe Harding Youth Connections. The video will be screened at the concert. Other artists are also on the bill.
- Monroe Harding is having a graduation celebration this year for 20 young people who received GEDs through Youth Connections. One youth was outstanding, and now qualifies for Hope Scholarship and just moved into Independent Living apartments. They are gearing up for holiday celebration in mid-December. Cash thanked the donors who provide gifts, cards, and essentials.
-

Tameka Daniel, South Memphis Alliance (SMA)

SMA exceeded the goal of getting surveys for youth considered active in the program.

- It is starting a Connections program in January aimed directly at juvenile offenders.
- The Alliance continues to plan recreational activities and provide educational supports.
- SMA is in conversation with Job Corps for youth who are on the borderline of dropping out of school and may need more structure. This has exciting implications for Memphis.

Jack Parks, Chattanooga/Hamilton/Southeast

- Parks notes that they will begin a Youth-4-Youth board next month and will be hiring youth to work for the board.

- The UTC Criminal Justice Department and Crisis centers are reaching out to teens about domestic and dating violence.
- The Opportunity Passport is still enrolling youth. The Career Development Program has four young adults.
- The afterschool tutoring program has three young adults, and tech-based reading has a few young men. They are really trying to improve reading levels. Ramsey asked about resources and advice for youth who unable to finish the GED program. Parks asked to continue discussion afterward, and Ramsey thanked him.
- They have teamed up with Pathways Young Adult Program to provide vouchers, and do case management. This will hopefully begin December 1st.
- Local Blue Cross and Blue Shield is hosting events for the rest of the year.
- He mentioned the Jimmy Wayne event with 250 youth and no behavioral problems. He attributed this to foster parents and kids. Many young adults were involved the event.
- The program is in the implementation and planning period on many projects.

Michael Leach for Project Now

- Leach mentioned that Project Now is enrolling youth, including a lot of work with Door Openers and KnoxWorks foundation in East Tennessee. An event is planned on workforce connections.

Update from Youth Villages Transition Living Program

Joseph Goldsmith, Transitional Living Coordinator, Youth Villages

- Goldsmith said 13 offices have peer-to-peer holiday parties being planned. They have finished NTYD surveys.
- This fiscal year with DCS and a private grant, 875 youth were served, which is more than in any previous year.
- Youth Villages has received initial unpublished impact results from the clinical trial that began in October 2010. It appears that they are achieving good outcomes in a number of life skills areas, which suggest transitional living has a positive impact. They have been waiting for results of the clinical trial for four years.
- February 11th is the Youth Villages Day on the Hill.
- December 2nd, the Department of Labor and Work Force Development is meeting with young adults to test out employment and resource tools.
- Goldsmith mentioned meeting with Leach on policy forum and needs of youth. Leach said they were invited to speak about social capital and well-being in Washington. Good legislation should be released soon for the child welfare population. Leach credited people around the country for being involved in advocacy work.
- One of their Memphis youth selected for highly competitive program in D.C. Now works as an employee D.C. and spoke in front of 2500 employees at Youth Villages conference.

Update from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant

Ashley Harrington, Centerstone

- Harrington mentioned that April Tanguay was not present, but wanted to share the annual report was submitted and enrollment numbers were at 102% of target.
- They are working to increase Youth Voice, inviting clients to participate in meetings like this, but must be cautious because of truancy.
- They are hosting information meetings in Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville to talk about the model Centerstone is using. Meetings will be held in late January, and they are trying to reserve spaces. More information will be emailed to confirm dates and locations.
- Harrington asked for help from the group concerning surveys. They were distributed to 150 people regarding services and the grant. Survey completion rates are low. The second component presents complications that cause low turnout. Centerstone is catching up but started behind due to late notice. They would love guidance on surveys. She said it takes two minutes, and they would appreciate people completing the survey.
- Petty said he would email it to the group and advised her to also share it with McGee for distribution to the CCMH.

Clayton Ramsey and Erica Spencer, Pathways

- Ramsey said Pathways is focusing on finding jobs for their transitional youth. They have had some favorable results. Spencer said 100 percent of youth have reported finding employment to be an important goal of treatment. Eight youth found jobs within three months. Spencer credit the therapists for their dedication and approaches for year one success. There are currently 17 youth enrolled.
- Grant funding helped Pathways locate clothing for interviews, which helped tremendously. The program appears to be working well.
- Spencer said they are looking at college applications and jobs for youth and many youth have requested clothes and personal hygiene items.
- Petty thanked them for sharing information with the group.

Update from Tennessee Housing and Development Agency

Sherry Smith, THDA

- THDA received approval for partial funding for a grant to Monroe Harding. Four applied, three in Middle Tennessee, and two received funding. Typically, THDA does not fund urban areas (Shelby, Knox, Davidson).
- The Housing Trust Fund and Emergency Solution Grant will have workshops on January 22nd and 23rd. Applications will be on the THDA website, due March 13th. ESG and Housing Trust Fund dollars will again be available in July 2015. Leach said this gives more time for organizations. Smith said these are matching funds. They are waiting for the federal government to approve funds, due Dec. 11th, for the current fiscal year.

- Smith informed the group of grants available for transportation issues, usually \$250. Youth can apply once or twice a year. Smith asked if youth are aware of it. Petty said he doubted it, and wondered if transportation grants are connected with TANF.
- Petty said he will be watch for the email and will distribute grant information.
- Leach thanked Smith for coming, helping them get involved and think through issues revolving around housing. Smith asked for information about events happening within members' regions.

Update from TN CASA

Karen Friar—TN CASA

- Friar says a Fostering Future grant from the national CASA organization allows them to train volunteers on the specific needs of older youth, as opposed to just advocating for younger children. Training is in Franklin, Crossville, and Athens. The goal is to develop 50 volunteers for the year; 35 are training now. A few are anticipated in West Tennessee. Early Tennessee trainings appeared to go well, and there are many opportunities to spread resources.
- They are having trouble pairing CASA volunteers with older youth. The goal 50, but only eight are matched so far. They are trying to get judges to appoint volunteers for older youth. Petty asked if they have met with judges and communicated their goal of working with 50. Friar said they have not; the director has been meeting with several judges elsewhere. Leach asked Friar to clarify the way she needs help. Petty offered aid in having these conversations, leading meetings and co-facilitating meetings with CASA staff.

Feedback on Annual Report delivered October 30, 2014

- Petty mentioned the report was submitted timely with a few numeric changes. He asked for feedback. Smith said it read very well.

Future Meeting Topics

- Smith recommended a speaker from the Fair Housing Council as a resource at future meetings.
- O'Neal said at a previous meeting it was suggested a Tennessee Disability Rights representative might be appropriate for a presentation in May. DCS has done much for DIDD youth but other youth with other disabilities may not have benefited as well.
- Johnson suggested a presentation from Employment First could provide further information about disability employment. Labor and Workforce Development currently

has a grant related to disability employment that can provide additional information if they move in that direction.

- Petty asked for any other ideas or issues people would like to bring up and there was no response. He reported the room is available until 3:30 p.m. if people wanted to have individual discussions.

Other Business

- There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1:55.



STATE OF TENNESSEE

TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Andrew Jackson Building, Ninth Floor
502 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0800
(615) 741-2633 (FAX) 741-5956
1-800-264-0904

Youth Transitions Advisory Council

May 7, 2015

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

937 Herman Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37208

Agenda

Welcome/Introductions/Acceptance of November Meeting Summary

- *Steve Petty, Youth Policy Advocate, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.*

Department of Children's Services, Office of Independent Living Update –

- *Dave Aguzzi, Assistant Director, Office of Independent, DCS.*
- *Ginger Harris, Office of Independent Living, DCS.*

Update from Resource Centers

- *Pamela Cash, Youth Connections at Monroe Harding.*
- *Keisha Shervington, Project Now! Helen Ross McNabb.*
- *Tameka Daniel, Dream Seekers, South Memphis Alliance.*
- *Jack Parks, I AM READY, Chattanooga/Hamilton/Southeast.*

Update from Youth Villages LifeSet Program

- *Joseph Goldsmith, YVLifeset Coordinator, Youth Villages.*

Update from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant

- *April Tanguay, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.*
- *Ashley Harrington, Centerstone.*
- *Erica Spencer, Pathways.*

Update on Funding Opportunities from Tennessee Housing and Development Agency

- *Sherry Smith, Tennessee Housing and Development Agency.*

Presentation from Disability Rights TN

- *April Rosete, Director of Advocacy, Disability Rights TN.*

Proposed Legislative Initiative

- *Nyasha Justice, Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Improvement Project.*

Future Meeting Topics

Next Meeting

- *June 19, 2015 meeting jointly with the Council on Children's Mental Health.*
- *August 13, 2015.*

Other Business



STATE OF TENNESSEE
TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Youth Transitions Advisory Council

May 7, 2015

12:30 pm – 3:30 pm Central Time

Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants:

Phil Acord	Betsy Holmes	Heidi Moseley
Dave Aguzzi	Kimberly Jeffries	Linda O’Neal
Liz Blasbery	Briana Johnson	Steve Petty
Tameka Daniel	Mary T. Jones	April Rosete
Jennifer Davis	Nyasha Justice	Keisha Shervington
Joseph Goldsmith	Kristy Leach	Natasha Smith
Darci Halfman	Anna Claire Lowder	Sherry Smith
Genesis Hardin	James Martin	Wendy Spence
Ashley Harrington	Melissa McGee	April Tanguay
Ginger Harris	Quatrece McKinney	
Timothy Hickman	Diana Miller	

Welcome and Introductions (Petty)

- Petty welcomed the group and expressed his appreciation for those attending. Petty introduced Natasha Smith, the newest employee at Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. The attendees introduced themselves.

Acceptance of November Meeting Summary (Petty)

- Petty asked members to review the November Meeting summary and asked for revisions or edits.
- **IT WAS MOVED (HARRINGTON) AND SECONDED (MARTIN) TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 2014 MEETING SUMMARY. S. SMITH MADE A CORRECTION TO PAGE FIVE NOTING THDA DID FUND OASIS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Presentation from Disability Rights TN (April Rosete)

- Rosete explained the Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee, the state's federally mandated legal protection & advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities, officially changed its name September 2014 to Disability Rights Tennessee (DRT) to align itself more closely to other federally mandated P&As across the country and connect more fully with the communities they serve.
- As similar name changes are being made by other state P&As across the country, Tennessee wanted to follow suit and better align themselves with the larger National Disability Rights Network, the nonprofit membership organization for federally mandated P&As and client assistance programs. Collectively, this network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services provided to people with disabilities in the United States and Tennessee is proud to be a member.
- Although the agency's name has changed, DRT's mission remains the same as it was at its inception in 1978 — to protect the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.
- This name change was just the first step in the agency's plan to expand the reach of advocacy services across the state. After 35 years of service, Disability Rights Tennessee is taking this opportunity to introduce more people to the diverse services being provided.
- DRT has represented—at no cost—more than 40,000 clients with disabilities.
- DRT oversees the vocational rehabilitation program.
- They have a grant through Social Security where they help those with Social Security benefits with assistance to cut through the various barriers.
- DRT assists individuals with effective communication help like a deaf individual who needs an interpreter when visiting the doctor. They also work with businesses to educate them on alternate identification and the individual's rights.
- DRT works with the election commission on poll site accessibility. They go out to the polling stations on election days and do surveys of voters with disabilities.
- DRT conducts education on work issues where an IP or behavioral intervention plans are not being implemented or followed.
- DRT's direct services include: investigating abuse and neglect in mental health hospitals, group homes, developmental disability centers, nursing homes and other community facilities; advocating for issues that are approved by the Review Team; providing legal representation for issues that are approved by the Review Team; providing education and outreach opportunities for self-advocates, family members, service providers and other community groups on topics related to the legal rights of Tennesseans with disabilities; and advocating public policy to educate and inform policy makers about issues that impact people with disabilities.
- They are limited in monitoring because they do not have access to records and monitoring is for a 3-month period. In an investigation, they have more authority. There is a probable cause clause so they do not need a release in investigations.

- Complaints out of Woodland Hills have been lack of activities and food, boredom, and the nurse will only give them an ice pack for headaches. There have been significant changes made in the last few months.
- DRT takes a much broader perspective when investigating by looking at staff training - if outside scope of rules and appropriate placement because there is no prescribed timeline.
- DRT also advocates for individuals related to issues arising during investigations.
- Since DRT is a legal-based agency, all work is overseen by an attorney. They ask people making referrals to either call with clients or call DRT ahead of time to explain the situation.
- The only authority they really have in the end is a lawsuit. They try to play nice and work together to fix problems since most do not rise to the level of a lawsuit.
- One of the hardest things is letting families know that Disability Rights TN exists because the calls never come from youth or patients at nursing homes. Most calls come from workers, family, friends, etc. They created a new abuse and neglect poster for distribution at all youth facilities and nursing homes.

Department of Children’s Services, Office of Independent Living Update (Dave Aguzzi and Ginger Harris)

- Aguzzi, Assistant Director, gave an update on achievements made since the last meeting.
- There has been an ongoing decrease in youth emancipating from foster care and an increase in young adults accepting Extension of Foster Care Services.
- The ability to serve 17-22 year olds through Youth Villages LifeSet with positive outcomes has improved.
- There has been an increase in authentic youth engagement and Youth for Youth Boards across the state; an increase in utilization of the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Bright Futures Scholarship and Independent Living Allowances; an increase in the number of college graduates in FY 2015; and increase in Independent Living wrap around services.
- They are conducting ongoing outreach to young adults who have exited the system through emancipation, Subsidized Permanent Guardianship (SPG) or adoption, to ensure connection to services.
- Life skill development survey for youth and development of training for foster parents around “Creating Teachable Moments” were conducted. They surveyed 949 youth about life skills development in custody in FY 2015.
- Over 1,000 youth in congregate care received the Wyman Teen Outreach Program (TOP) in FY 2014.
- Youth developed the Independent Living (IL) Toolkit for Success Manual and Guide for Teenagers in Care, and have been involved in policy and practice development.

- Extension of Foster Care Services (EFCS) for July 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015:

Total EFCS Episodes to March 31, 2015	636
Total Young Adults Served to March 31, 2015	625
Total Active in EFCS as of March 31, 2015	342

- The following conveys the number of young adults who received EFCS during the same time frame last year:

Total EFCS Episodes to March 31, 2014	544
Total Young Adults Served to March 31, 2014	528
Total Active in EFCS as of March 31, 2014	257

- Scholarships were reported as follows:

Hope Foster care scholarship by year graduated from High School:

- 2014.....52
 - 2013.....40
 - 2012.....47
 - 2011.....45
 - 2010.....49
 - FY 2015 ETV-331; Bright Futures- 117 =448 (Through March 31st 2015).
 - FY 2014 ETV- 262; Bright Futures- 139 = 401
 - FY 2013 ETV- 282; Bright Futures-126 = 408
- Harris, Youth Engagement Lead, invited Genesis Hardin to discuss the Statewide Youth Ambassador Board Meeting held March 26-27. They had 20 young adults participate. Youth discussed issues surrounding normalcy policies and met those providers who can help with legal needs for young adults. The youth had concerns of being labeled as a “level” and labeled in general after coming into the system. The youth wanted foster parents to have high expectations from them and to believe in them.
 - Hardin spoke about her experience and the outreach opportunities to let the community know they are not bad kids. They talked about experiences with Guardians ad litem (GAL) and how some of the youth never met GAL until court.
 - Harris announced the Middle Tennessee Youth for Youth monthly meeting will be on Wednesday, May 27th. For more information, contact Ginger Harris, Youth Engagement Lead at 615-532-9447.

Update from Resource Centers

- Youth Connections at Monroe Harding (Quatrece McKinney in for Pam Cash)
 - Seven youth earned their HiSET and they will have a graduation celebration for those who have participated in their programs on May 19. The students will wear

cap and gowns and speakers will be there to make it a real celebration. Providers in the room are invited to attend.

- McKinney shared a success story of a young man who aged-out of the system, but stayed connected with DCS. He received a football scholarship to a school in Arkansas.
- Received funds from THDA and hired a part-time housing assistant, Phyllis Sutton, in Davidson County to oversee the housing program. She will be an excellent resource for young people who are looking for housing even if they do not qualify for their program. These resources can help with rent, utilities, deposits, etc.

- Helen Ross McNabb – Project NOW! (Keisha Shervington and Genesis Hardin)
 - Using the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) Opportunity Passport, Child & Family Tennessee's Project Navigating Opportunities that Work (NOW) offers financial literacy courses for youth transitioning from foster care. Youth can attend courses, open a savings account and receive stipends and matched savings of up to \$1000/year for approved purchases.
 - Program participants develop a written plan for approved assets such as computers, vehicles and housing, medical or educational expense.
 - There are 91 active participants and 12 new enrollments in March
 - Since 2011, there have been 135 youth enrolled; ages 17-21 are the majority of the youth served.
 - Opportunity Passport surveys are complete.
 - Assets purchases were 16 versus four per quarter.
 - Life skills like obtaining employment as well as educational opportunities and financial aid assistance has been their focus.
 - They have had 62 referrals since January 2015.
 - Project NOW! promotes leadership development by giving youth an opportunity to speak and share their experiences.
 - Hardin, who has been a part of Project NOW! since 2011, shared her experience with Project NOW! Her biggest match was in education because she used her match money provided to get back in school and she is now attending the University of Tennessee.
 - Hardin also used her match money to help with her car.
 - There is a webpage where speaking engagements for the youth can be posted.

- South Memphis Alliance (Tameka Daniel)
 - South Memphis Alliance (SMA), a local non-profit dedicated to supporting young adults transitioning out of foster care, is launching a fundraising campaign after

being the proud recipients of a \$15,000 leverage match grant from an anonymous donor. This grant will support SMA's Dream Seekers Program which offers life skills with an emphasis on financial educational programs.

- SMA has set a goal of matching the grant donation through a combination of community and private donations, and they need your help to do so.
 - On May 30th, SMA will kick off their fundraising campaign at the SMA Community Fair which will feature service providers offering support for their cause.
 - They have an 80 percent goal and the retention rate did go down after survey because many of the youth only want the stipend of \$40 for taking the survey.
 - They are working on an internal plan to change the retention rate.
 - Housing is a problem nationwide. Finding a livable, low-cost housing unit for youth who have no job history is a major problem, especially in Memphis.
 - They had eight new enrollments for the Opportunity Passport program.
 - The center conducted surveys of youth who have been active in the program. Staff has already made contact with 80 percent of the youth involved. The 80 percent are considered active as they have recently participated in events or used the center.
 - They have been attending Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) meetings to implement a pilot program to reduce reliance on local confinement of court-involved youth, dramatically reducing detention facility populations.
- Petty thanked all the presenters for the resource centers for their work and being here at YTAC.

Update from Youth Villages LifeSet Program (Joseph Goldsmith)

- Youth Villages' transitional living program provides at-risk youth and young adults leaving the foster care, juvenile justice and mental health systems the intensive in-home support and guidance they need to make a successful transition to adulthood.
- The transitional living program works not only with young adults who are "aging out" of state custody but also with the young person's family and support systems to help ensure a more successful transition.
- Youth Villages' outcome data show that the program significantly reduces the risk of homelessness, poverty and illegal behavior among the young adults served.
- Goldsmith talked about name change from Transitional Living because the name needed to pattern what they actually did. They are working with key stakeholders in different states to have them provide continued services to youth transitioning out. The name change makes the program more marketable to other states.
- Serving more youth this year; 670 across the state to date.

- Took youth to DC and were invited to a Grammy event. They also heard the Howard University Gospel Choir, toured the Capitol and met with Legislators.
- On May 20th, an event will take place to release the results of a study that will reveal Transitional Living participation leads to increase earnings and stability across mental health, living, relationships, with urban versus rural and juvenile justice versus non juvenile justice.

Updates from Treatment and Recovery for Youth Grant (April Tanguay and Ashley Harrington)

See “Youth Recovery” handout

- Tanguay reported using the carryover funding left from original grant to expand A-CRA training over next six months to a year. Chestnut Health will come out to train. Other trainings like cultural competency training, network providers with faith-based, SOC and wraparound training with clinicians will also be used with carryover funding.
- Regional councils are established. They are meeting and exceeding all federal government goals.
- They have to have a certain number of surveys completed various stages and they are at 90 percent for three month and six month. Still have four months to go until end of the year.
- Harrington stated Centerstone is at 39 enrollments with 50 being their goal. She noticed more transitional age youth this year 12 compared to four last year.
- She confirmed local advisory councils established.
- They are working with In Home TN to develop an online juvenile guide and a Youth AA in the area. They are trying to find free service providers instead of those who will come in with insurance and a sliding scale.
- Outings for youth and their friends or families are in the works, like bowling and a trip to Sky Zone.
- Harrington happily reported ordering K2 and Spice test cups to test for synthetic marijuana.

Updates on Funding Opportunities from Tennessee Housing and Development Agency (Sherry Smith)

- Smith talked about emergency solutions grant and the awards to Oasis and Monroe Harding. She said it has been slow going and a difficult grant to administer and serve this demographic - a lot of obstacles for youth with no job history, no credit, foster care, etc.
- THDA is looking at Low Income Tax Credit program to see if they can make homeless youth a special population and see if they can build some of these apartment units around community colleges to give them a chance at a free education.

- Smith encouraged everyone to look at Health and Trust Fund to see if we can pay for acquisition, rehab, duplex and rental housing. The problem is the five-year requirement and some people are not sure if they want to deal with rental properties.
- Youth and Homeless programs are very popular. THDA wants to partner with SOC providers and welcomes ideas.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides one-time, once a-year assistance. Agencies that assist on the website.

Proposed Legislative Initiative (Nyasha Justice and Dave Aguzzi)

- Justice informed providers of a problem regarding procedures to be followed by juvenile courts during supervision of youth participating in Extension of Foster Care (EFC) Services. At present no laws have been written to provide guidance for courts and foster care review boards in their review of extension of foster care youth. Passage of legislation would provide guidance for the development of rules of procedure.
- She pointed out there is no judicial oversight if there is no permanency plan in most counties. She asked if permanency plans had to be ratified to serve 18-21 population?
- She would like the Council to make a recommendation for the laws to change to include 18-21 year olds and to push legislation geared specifically for 18-21 population.
- O'Neal stated that a report is due in October from YTAC. Justice would like the legislation to provide specific guidelines to judges during hearings and for those who will not even get a hearing unless something else triggers it.
- The counties with model boards will develop local rules requiring the 18-21 population to come in at the end of semesters and summer/holiday breaks.
- Justice does not believe the judges will push back for the most part. She believes they just need law to follow. AOC Director Tate should support this new initiative.
- O'Neal suggested writing a letter to start the process and including it in the report to go to the legislature in October. She advised it will not be a quick fix. O'Neal is on the board for the Court Improvement Program.
- Justice said having a guide will help train the judges as well especially because the law sees this demographic as adults.
- Juvenile Court Judges need more training on how to use CASA and other providers. These recommendations will need to be integrated into the Rules and Procedure.
- Petty asked the room if everyone felt okay with O'Neal drafting a letter. The consensus was to support initiating this effort.
- Justice announced there are openings for the Peer Advocate Model Foster Care Review Boards in various locations. These are paid positions with specific criteria.

Future Meeting Topics

- O'Neal announced YTAC will have a joint meeting with the Council on Children's Mental Health (CCMH) on June 18 at Goodwill Industries of Middle Tennessee, room TBD. It will be 10 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. This will be an opportunity for resource centers to provide helpful information across different spectrums.
- August 13, 2015

Other Business

- Petty asked Kristy Leach, Director of Children and Youth Mental Health, to discuss Healthy Transitions, a new initiative to improve access to treatment and support services for youth and young adults ages 16 – 25 who either have, or are at risk of developing a serious mental health condition. This will be accomplished by increasing awareness, screening and detection, outreach and engagement, referrals to treatment, coordination of care and evidence-informed treatment for this age group. Leach oversees the merging of all Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services children's programs under one umbrella. Leach stated Kisha Ledlow will be able to speak more about this new initiative at the joint meeting in June.

Announcements

- McGee talked about an upcoming SOC Conference in August 28-29. The conference is free of charge.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

APPENDIX B

TCA 37-2-417

TCA 37-2-601

TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED

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*** Current through the 2014 Regular Session ***

Title 37 Juveniles

Chapter 2 Placement of Juveniles

Part 4 Foster Care

Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-2-417 (2014)

37-2-417. Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act of 2010.

(a) This section may be known and cited as "Tennessee's Transitioning Youth Empowerment Act of 2010."

(b) The department of children's services is authorized to develop a program to provide services to youth who are transitioning to adulthood from state custody. Services may be provided on a voluntary basis to any person who is at least eighteen (18) years of age but less than twenty-one (21) years of age, who was in the custody of the department at the time of the person's eighteenth birthday and who is:

(1) Completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;

(2) Enrolled in an institution which provides postsecondary or vocational education;

(3) Participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;

(4) Employed for at least eighty (80) hours per month; or

(5) Incapable of doing any of the activities described in subdivisions (b)(1)-(4) due to a medical condition, including a developmental or intellectual condition, which incapability is supported by regularly updated information in the permanency plan of the person. In such a case the person shall be in compliance with a course of treatment as recommended by the department.

(c) Services may also be made available to any person who meets the requirements of subsection (b) but refused such services at the time of the person's eighteenth birthday if at any time the person seeks to regain services prior to the person's twenty-first birthday.

(d) The advisory committee established in § 37-2-601 shall serve as an advisory committee for programs and services established by this section.

(e) The commissioner of children's services shall establish policies and procedures in order to

create and implement this program.

(f) The department is authorized to seek federal funding or to participate in federal programs developed for this purpose.

TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED

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*** Current through the 2014 Regular Session ***

Title 37 Juveniles

Chapter 2 Placement of Juveniles

Part 6 Extension of Foster Care

Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-2-601 (2014)

37-2-601. Establishment of extension of foster care services advisory council.

(a) (1) The executive director of the Tennessee commission on children and youth shall establish a non-funded, voluntary, extension of foster care services advisory council, which shall be responsible for:

(A) Identifying strategies to assess and track effectiveness of extension of foster care services and the operation of resources centers authorized by this part; and

(B) Identifying the following:

(i) Strategies for maintaining accurate numbers of children served by extension of foster care services;

(ii) The number of services provided by the department of children's services;

(iii) The number of children who accept these services;

(iv) Reasons why children do not accept these services; and

(v) The number of children who continue their education and the number who do not.

(2) The advisory council shall report no later than October 31 of each year to the Tennessee commission on children and youth, the civil justice committee and health committee of the house of representatives and the health and welfare committee of the senate, making recommendations for the continuing operation of the system of extension of foster care services and supports.

(b) The department of children's services and other state agencies that provide services or supports to youth transitioning out of state custody shall participate fully in the council and shall respond to the recommendations put forth by the council as appropriate.

37-2-602. Determination of whether youth applicants for assistance were formerly in state custody -- Identification by state agencies on agency forms -- Sharing of information.

(a) All state agencies that administer cash or in-kind assistance, or both, to youth eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) years of age within the course of normal business shall make reasonable efforts to determine if an applicant for assistance has ever been in the custody of the state. If the applicant has been in state custody, the state agency shall share information with the applicant regarding possible services to be provided by the department of children's services, other state agencies and community partners.

(b) State agencies shall modify agency forms to identify youth who have been in state custody as the agencies' forms are otherwise revised and updated.

(c) The department of children services may share services information for former foster youth and youth transitioning from state custody through already established models such as, but not limited to, web sites, emails, verbal notifications or other printed material.

37-2-603. Establishment of resource centers to provide or facilitate assistance.

(a) The private, nonprofit community is urged to establish a network to provide information, assistance, services and supports to persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who were in foster care on the person's eighteenth birthday and persons from sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years of age who have been in foster care at any time after the person's fourteenth birthday.

(b) The resource centers shall provide or facilitate the assistance necessary to:

(1) Deal with the challenges and barriers associated with the transition into adulthood and early adult years;

(2) Support post-secondary education, vocational training and job skills development for such person;

(3) Find and retain employment, housing, transportation, parenting and family support, health care and mental health care; and

(4) Navigate systems and procedures that impact the person's education, employment, health and mental welfare and basic needs.

(c) These services shall be available at any time until the person reaches twenty-four (24) years

of age regardless of whether the youth elects to remain in a voluntary extension of foster care arrangement with the department or the youth chooses to terminate any relationship with the state.

(d) The resource centers shall be supported in part by the department in the community where the centers are located, subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated for this purpose. The department is authorized and encouraged to share staff with the resource centers, as well as provide financial support.

37-2-604. Preparing foster children for independent living.

In preparing a foster child for independent living prior to the child reaching eighteen (18) years of age, the department shall provide information on the resource centers established pursuant to this part to all children over sixteen (16) years of age in foster care. The information shall include the address of the nearest resource center and services available from the center. Each child shall be encouraged to maintain periodic contact with resource center personnel and to provide current and accurate residence and contact information to the resource center. Ninety (90) days before a child leaves state custody the department of children's services shall notify the child of all information, services, web sites and assistance available for post-custody.

37-2-605. Construction of part.

Nothing in this part shall be construed to require a person to have maintained continuous contact with the resource centers or the department in order to be eligible to receive services from the resource centers or the department.

